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519. Shropshire. UK. Buses. Jan 1997, 60 minutes by Dave Spencer visits Shrewsbury, Telford, Oswestry and Ludlow.

520. London. UK. Buses. Dec 96/Jan 97, 60 minutes, digital master by Dave Spencer shot in High Wycombe and Slough with filler material from South London and Staines.

521. Hereford/Worcester. K. Buses. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer from digital masters starts at Hereford with plenty of independents then on to Worcester, Redditch and Bromsgrove. Jan 1996.

522. Nottingham. UK. Buses. 60 minutes by Dave Spencer on digital masters covering municipal buses plus Trent/Barton fleets and independents. Entry into service of 'tram livery' buses.

525. London. UK. Buses. 60 minutes from digital master by Dave Spencer, filmed Jan/Feb 1997. Starts South London then Westminster Jan, then Feb in Finsbury Park and Golders Green.

526. East Anglia. UK. Buses. 1.3.97 video by Dave Spencer from digital masters visiting Norwich, Gt Yarmouth and Ipswich.

527. Gloucester. UK. Buses. March 1997 video by Dave Spencer. 8th March starting with Cheltenham then moving on to Gloucester with its variety of minor operators.

528. West Midlands. UK. Buses 1996/97. Starts in December 1996 with Coventry and Rugby then March 1997 to Birmingham for new route dedicated to buses.

529. West Scotland. UK. Buses. 60 minute video from digital masters by Dave Spencer shot 14/15 March 1997, starts in Dumfries, then Ayr and finishes in Kilmarnock, lots of Stagecoach much changed bus scene.

535. Cobham. UK. Buses Rally. April 1997 (Dig). Dave Spencer records the annual bus rally and museum open day at Cobham and Brooklands with the rally entrants seen on arrival together with vehicles on the free bus services.

536. South West England. Buses. 1996/97 (Dig). Video by Dave Spencer, Poole, Dorset August 96, Swindon Aug 96 and Bristol April 1997, 60 minutes.

537. Wales, South. UK. Buses. 1996/97 (Dig) 60 minute video by Dave Spencer, 1996 in Swansea and Llanelli then 4/97 in Newport and Cardiff.

538. North East England. Buses. (Dig). Video by Dave Spencer 1996-97. Newcastle, Gateshead, Whitley Bay. Duration 60 minutes.

539. Rallies. UK. Trucks, Buses. 1996-97 (Dig). Video by Dave Spencer, 1997 Cheshire Run for commercials and Forest of Dean 1996 with again lorries and buses and even a few old cars, lots of vintage variety, 60 minutes.

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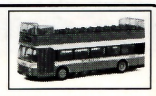

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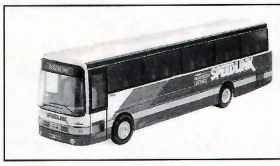

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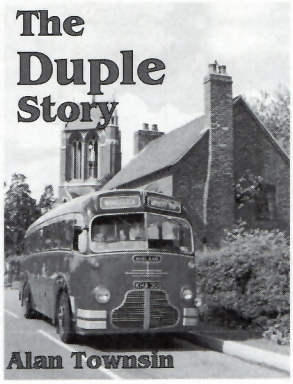

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MARK BAILEY

BUSES

Volume 49 No 508 **July 1997**

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SANDY MACDONALD

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G. IRVINE MILLAR & JOHN A. DOHERTY

Cover:
Thames Transit has been providing competition for City of Oxford for 10 years now, both on Oxford city services and also on the Oxford-London service which Thames Transit runs as Oxford Tube, using Volvo B10Ms, in this case with Jonckheere bodywork.
DANIEL HILL

It was inevitable, was it not, that once deregulation started to work effectively, we should have a change of Government. As we have said before, this last year or two has seen things improve, but unfortunately the pundits don't seem to have seen it. All the debate about the way forward for public transport under the new regime seems to centre on the problems of an ageing bus fleet and of under-capitalised operators chasing each other around for a diminishing number of passengers.

We wouldn't for one minute suggest that that wasn't an effect of deregulation, and we wouldn't move from our stance of criticising that situation. But by and large it is a feature of the recent past. While the present situation in the bus market is far from perfect, more and more bus services are now in the hands of decent, modern buses for the most part of the day and there is much more stability of services. There is less scope for the big groups to grow by acquisition and pressure from city investors for the businesses to continue to grow means that there is more innovation coming through, while the poor quality operator is almost a thing of the past, driven away by the inability to compete against operators doing it properly and tougher standards.

What we cannot condone is the huge damage that has been wrought on the bus business by the uncertainty of deregulation for the best part of a decade. We have now been through that painful process, and while we would like to see the new Government building on the strengths which are now at last coming to the fore, the last thing the industry needs now is another fundamental change in its structure and framework. Another massive upheaval would be disastrous, especially if it takes as long to come good as the last one did.

There is much talk in Government circles now about an integrated transport system. We shall have to wait until next spring to find out what the Government has in mind, but it is to be hoped that it has a clear view of what it means by 'integrated transport'. We all *think* we know what it is, and we all think it will be wonderful — but there is a danger that integrated transport is little more than a Holy Grail. It can mean anything from putting a bus stop outside a railway station to a fundamental rethink of the relationship of land use and transport provision.

Maybe the ideal of integrated transport is now more achievable with modern technology; sensible use of real-time information and Smartcards could ease the process considerably. But one thing that will have to change is people's attitudes to public transport. Convincing car users that public transport is for them, at least for part of their journey, and is not merely a lifeline for those who have failed to achieve the status of which car ownership is an essential part, is going to be the hard part. Break through that barrier, and the bus can make a massive contribution to the new Government's aims to shift the modal split in favour of public transport.

STEPHEN MORRIS

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NEWS NEWS NEWS

this month's news stories

Optare and DAF get back together to launch low-floor 'decker

DAF Bus, which won the race to show the first low-floor double-deck chassis by having one at Coach & Bus '95, is now favourite to be the first on to the British market with a complete vehicle, ahead of Dennis and Volvo. Dennis has already built a complete Trident prototype, though this is an export vehicle and its UK model is a little way behind.

The DAF chassis is the DB250LF, which like the conventional DB250, which formed the basis of the original Spectra and has subsequently been bodied by Northern Counties, is based largely on the single-deck SB220, in the LF low-floor version in this case, from the rear axle forwards. However behind the rear axle the suspension and driveline layout are derived from the MCW Metrobus which the Spectra replaced, with the 8.66litre DAF RS200 engine, which now meets Euro 2 emissions limits without recourse to electronic control, using DAF's Advanced Turbo Intercooling technique. The engine is transverse, and although not much is yet known about Dennis's or Volvo's low-floor offerings it is widely expected that both will have in-line engines. DAF prefers to keep the transverse engine layout because it minimises overall length. Nevertheless the new Spectra is 10.7m long and has an overall height of 4.17m (13ft 8in).

Conventional axles are used front and rear, with the same Dana-GKN hub-reduction unit at the rear as on the previous model and a drop-centre beam axle at the front. The hub reduction unit is advantageous in a low-floor layout as the portal for the drive input can be smaller, as much of the torque is handled at the hubs. The Voith D.851 three-speed automatic gearbox) is standard, with options of a four-speed Voith or four or five-speed ZF HP500 unit. Electronic control is available for the air suspension, giving a high-speed kneel facility.

The Spectra body is largely similar to the original Spectra, and will resemble in particular the low-height version, though with full highbridge headroom inside, due to the lower floor, which is 320mm above the ground up to the rear axle, where there is a 200mm step up. The window line on the lower deck is lower than the conventional version, however. The Spectra's Alusuisse construction is carried over to the new model, complete with gasket glazing, and there is considerable commonality of parts. However there is a new Alusuisse floor structure, based on that used by MAN on Berlin low-floor double-deckers.

In line with London Transport thinking on double-deckers, the centre door is moved back one bay compared with the original Spectra on dual-door versions, and this layout maximises the low floor area. A similar approach has been followed by East Lancs' recent new double-deck body. In single-door form the new Spectra can seat up to 80 passengers, with 17 seats on the low-floor level. Optare will also fit the fuel tank under the staircase to minimise intrusion in the low-floor area. The staircase is the same compact structure as used on the conventional Spectra, though with one extra 200mm step.

Optare expects to have the first of the new Spectras on the road by September. Production of the conventional Spectra finished some time ago, with Wilts & Dorset — which has 47 — as the most recent customer. Since the demise of United Bus, in which DAF and Optare were both partners, and the subsequent appointment of Hughes-DAF as importer of DAF chassis in Britain, relationships between DAF and Optare have been cool, and neither the Spectra nor the DAF-based single-deck Delta have been actively marketed recently. However the new joint venture heralds a reconciliation; Optare had been very positive in its approach to DAF over a joint venture in the new Spectra and is sharing the risk. Indeed there are also 15 DAF-based Deltas now in build at Optare, the first for some time.

The new Spectra will sell for £135,000, rather more than a conventional double-decker. Hughes-DAF, which supplies the chassis, is part of the Cowie Group and is now responsible for procuring vehicles for Cowie's bus operations; thus the new Spectra is likely to find its way into some of the Cowie fleets, with possible inroads into London.

In other fields of its activities, Optare has acquired additional premises in Rotherham for its Autobus range of small coach bodies, to meet demand for the new version on the new Mercedes Vario chassis. Its Unitec parts and service operation will also have facilities on the new site. Optare is also importing a new version of the Bova Futura, a high-floor executive model, the FHC12.300 with a 300bhp version of the Cummins C-series engine. Previously the Cummins was offered only in lower versions of the Bova. However as the Cummins is lighter than the usual DAF engine, it enables a 49-seat Bova to be fully-specified, complete with air conditioning, double glazing and retarder, within the UK gross vehicle weight limit of 17tonnes, which is a tonne less than the rest of Europe. In particular the UK limit on a single axle is 10.5 tonnes as opposed to 11.5tonnes, which creates particular difficulties for rear-engined vehicles.

Optare's Coach Sales Division is also to introduce a new coach product at Coach & Bus '97, but is remaining tight-lipped as to what this might be.

Artist's impression of the low-floor Spectra

Metroline and MTL to float

Both London bus operator Metroline and Merseyside-based MTL have announced their intentions to seek a floatation on the London stock exchange. MTL Trust Holdings Ltd has appointed Dr Henry Shirman from Ford Motor Company as managing director to lead the floatation. He reports to Peter Coombes, the group's Chairman and Chief Executive, who said: 'We have made no secret of our plans to float MTL Trust Holdings, possibly as early as spring of next year'.

MTL began life with the privatisation of Merseyside Transport, the former PTE operator in Liverpool, Birkenhead, Wallasey, St Helens and Southport, which has expanded by acquisition, of other bus and coach operators in the north-west, especially on Merseyside, including Fareway and Liverbus, of London bus operator London Northern, together with London Suburban, which came with Liverbus, and R&I in London, and by the winning of two rail franchises, Merseyrail Electrics and Regional Railways North East.

Harrow-based Metroline is rather smaller, with 430 buses running out of garages in Cricklewood, Willesden, Harrow Weald, Edgware and North Wembley in north-west London and runs 25 coaches from Watford. It was bought by its management and employees from London Transport in October 1994 for £20 million and increased turnover from £28.5 million to £37.1 million in its first two and a half years of independence. It plans to complete its floatation, which will value the company at £35 million, this summer through an institutional placing. Some 700 of its 1,200 employees are share holders and stand to gain windfalls averaging £9,000.

If both floatations go through, then London United will be the only one of the 10 London Buses companies not part of a publicly-quoted group. CentreWest is now part of FirstBus, Leaside and South London are part of the Cowie Group, East London and Selkent are part of Stagecoach and London General was bought from its management and employees by Go-Ahead Group, which already owned London Central. Metroline managing director Declan O'Farrell said the floatation would help Metroline to grow organically and through acquisition. It is however by far the smallest privatised bus company to seek a floatation so far.

Metrobus grows again

Following the news last month that Metrobus had taken a 30% share of East Sussex-based Leisurelink, the Orpington, Kent, based firm has now acquired East Surrey Bus Services, with effect from 2 June. East Surrey runs 23 buses from a depot in South Godstone on a mixture of contracted and commercial services, some of which penetrate Greater London around Croydon.

Existing East Surrey management and staff are expected to remain, though some of the fleet will be replaced to bring about standardisation with the main Metrobus fleet.

Incidentally Leisurelink Wales has no connection now with the East Sussex Leisurelink company. It is expected that Leisurelink Wales will change its name before much longer.

New Labour's new transport team

The new Labour Government has announced its transport team. The Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, is Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions, marking a return to closer ties between the Departments of the Environment and Transport, as occurred in the 1970s when the two were merged for a time. Dr Gavin Strang is Minister for Transport, with overall responsibility for the Department of Transport and its agencies. He is a member of the Cabinet. Glenda Jackson is Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Transport in London), responsible for transport in London, integrated transport policy, London Transport and local transport outside London. She also has responsibility for railways, aviation and shipping. Completing the transport team is Baroness Hayman, who as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State (Minister for Roads), is responsible for roads and road safety and is spokesman for both transport and the environment in the House of Lords.

Already Gavin Strang has announced an initiative to urge car commuters to switch to public transport, and the Government has made known its intention to influence the modal split in favour of public transport. John Prescott has promised a White Paper on integrated transport by next spring.

Bus people

Chris Carr, who was marketing director of FirstBus, was made redundant following a reorganisation during May. Chris began his career as a traffic trainee with Bristol Omnibus in 1960, and became Badgerline's first marketing manager in 1986. He became marketing director of Badgerline Group, a position he retained on the formation of FirstBus in 1995. During his time at Badgerline and FirstBus he was always a great help to *Buses*, for which we are very grateful. We wish him well in his quest for another position in the industry.

Howard Cunningham has taken early retirement from his position of training manager for Translink, the combined Ulsterbus/Northern Ireland Railways, due to restructuring. He joined UTA as an engineering apprentice in 1957, but left in 1961 to pursue a career in industrial relations. He rejoined Ulsterbus as personnel officer in 1988. He was instrumental in the formation of the Irish Transport Trust in 1969, and has been its treasurer ever since.

Brighton merger complete

As expected Go-Ahead Group completed the acquisition of employee-owned former municipality Brighton Transport, which had latterly traded as Brighton Blue Bus, on 21 May. It is now merged with Brighton & Hove Bus & Coach

In line with its usual innovative publicity Brighton & Hove has published a new magazine for passengers, *On Route*, in which it describes the merger as 'a true marriage of convenience for bus passengers'. It says the merger will '. . . bring benefits to the travelling public, . . . offering a co-ordinated, more efficient service'.

National in Norway & MMC inquiry

National Express Group has formed a joint venture company with The Schoyen Group, which runs 400 buses in Norway, and supplies 40% of Oslo's bus services. The company is to be named Concordia Bus, with Frode Larsen, president of Schoyen, as chairman, and National Express chief executive Philip White as deputy chairman, and is to tender for public transport contracts and acquire existing bus companies in the Nordic countries — where Stagecoach is active, through its Swebus company, and in Germany.

Concordia is owned 63% by National Express and 37% by Schoyen. It expects to have made its first substantial acquisition within the next 18 months.

Meanwhile, on the home front, Margaret Beckett, the new Secretary of State for Trade & Industry, has decided to refer National Express's acquisition of the rail franchises for ScotRail and Central Trains to the Monopolies & Mergers Commission. The Director-General of Fair Trading had recommended that the acquisitions should not be referred, subject to National Express Group divesting Scottish Citylink. However Margaret Beckett considered that both acquisitions did require immediate investigation. Central Trains runs the rail network in the West Midlands, where National Express group has the dominant bus operator, Travel West Midlands.

Premyer name gets dropped

Plaxton has objected to the use of the name 'Premyer' for East Lancs' new double-deck bus body, claiming it is too close to its own Première name. East Lancs maintains that the two products are so dissimilar as to prevent the possibility of confusion, but has nonetheless agreed to change the name. Fortunately the Dennis Arrow-based Premyers delivered so far to Capital Citybus do not carry nameplates.

East Lancs is offering a prize for the best name, which will include a letter Y to fit in with its present theme of Cityzen, Flyte and Spryte. Our suggestion of 'Excalybur' has, inexplicably, been turned down . . .

In addition to Arrows for Citybus East Lancs has now completed the bodywork on Volvo Olympians for Harris Bus, with a new front grille for the front radiator. East Lancs is also building the new body on Volvo B10M for Nottingham, the first B10M double-deck buses for more than four years.

FirstBus gets going in Fife

FirstBus has started its new operation in Fife, competing with Stagecoach's Fife company in retaliation for Stagecoach's new Glasgow operation which is competing with FirstBus's Strathclyde and Kelvin Central companies. It is trading as FifeFirst, with a registered office at Lowland Omnibuses in Dalkeith. Reliable Vehicles, the Scottish Scania dealer, is providing 12 Scania K113/Wright Axcess-ultralows for the service, with similar buses transferred within FirstBus from Rider York; 17 buses are needed altogether.

Service 56, between Ballingry, Cowdenbeath, Dunfermline and Edinburgh, started on 9 June.

Meanwhile Strathclyde had already started its service over Stagecoach's A1 route in Ayrshire, with 15 new UVG-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs. Services ran free for the first 10 days, which Stagecoach's A1 Service matched. Neil Renilson of Stagecoach Scotland said that the newcomer was affecting A1 'in that they are carrying some passengers, which clearly has some effect'. He maintained however that A1 attracted considerable passenger loyalty and the majority of passengers were staying with A1.

Strathclyde has also stepped up services between Cumbernauld and Glasgow, on which Stagecoach is also competing, using new coaches including the new Scania L94 with the low-height version of the Irizar Century body, the first of which was depicted with Holmswood Coaches, Ormskirk, last month. The second phase of Stagecoach's onslaught into Glasgow began in May, using new Northern Counties-bodied Volvo B10Ms on services from Easterhouse and East Kilbride in Buchanan bus station.

One of the new Wright Axcess-ultralow Scania L113s being used by FirstBus on FirstFife services. This one is in use on SMT services prior to the start of FifeFirst. RICHARD WALTER

New subscription arrangements

In order to improve our service to subscribers to *Buses* and our other magazines, Ian Allan Ltd has set up a new subscriptions department, based at our Coombelands House offices in Addlestone. The new address for subscriptions is Ian Allan Subscriptions, Coombelands House, Addlestone, Surrey KT15 1HY. The direct phone line for subscriptions, renewals and queries during office hours is 01932 857257, while there is a fax and out-of-hours answerphone service on 01932 828769.

'Guest' editor

Many thanks to Gavin Booth, who edited a substantial amount of this month's magazine to enable the editor to get a short holiday!

Stagecoach takes AA Buses

Stagecoach has expanded its presence in Ayrshire by acquiring the bus operations of AA Buses. The deal was agreed on 1 May, and takes effect from 29 June. AA's coach operations are not included, so AA is keeping its operator's licence and premises; the bus services will be run from Western's Ayr depot. AA runs around 45 buses, and Stagecoach will retain the more recent ones, though does not see a long-term future for its Mk 1 Leyland Nationals. However the newest vehicles in the fleet are rented and will return to their renters before long.

The AA identity and green livery will be retained for the main Ayr-Ardrossan service, though buses on other services will take Stagecoach identity.

Silver Choice goes to management

Silver Choice of East Kilbride, which went into receivership in February, has been sold to a management buyout by KPMG Corporate Recovery. It now trades as Silver Choice Travel Ltd and continues to run a private hire service as well as a nightly Glasgow-London express service from its premises in Milton Road, East Kilbride. Thirteen jobs have been safeguarded.

Alexander-has delivered its first 11 ALX100-bodied Mercedes-Benz Varios to Cowie Group companies Midland Red North and Stevensons to replace older minibuses in Crewe and Lichfield. They have aluminium bodywork and 27 seats to DiPTAC specification. The low build of the Vario chassis gives a 250mm first step from the ground and two 200mm entrance steps.

ECOC running day apology

Mr K. Worland extends his apologies to any readers who may have travelled to King's Lynn on 15 June for the second Eastern Counties running day. Due to circumstances beyond his control, and following discussion with members of King's Lynn Borough Council, the event had to be cancelled at very short notice.

Commemorative services

London & Country finally withdraws well-known Green Line 727 service between Kingston and Crawley from 28 June, and to commemorate this event Crawley garage will be running RF315 on the service on that date.

Then on 24 August there is a special service between Chorley and Preston, Bolton and Blackburn to mark the last Leyland Atlantean bought new by Ribble. ECW-bodied 1481 (TRN 481V), based at Chorley, is the last Atlantean bought new. Ribble has run Atlanteans continuously for nigh-on 40 years. It will run on service 125 from Chorley to Preston at 10.56, return from Preston at 11.35, 124 Chorley-Blackburn at 12.20 and 16.20, returning at 13.00 and 17.00 from Blackburn, and Chorley to Bolton, also route 125, at 14.36, returning from Bolton at 15.15. Details from John Young, operations manager at Chorley, on 01257 267728.

Diary dates

28/29 June:
Crosville Enthusiasts Club Crosville vehicle gathering. The Plassey Ground, Wrexham.

29 June:
North Weald Rally, North Weald Airfield, near Epping.

5/6 July:
Model Transport & Architecture Exhibition, Transperience, Euroway Exit, M606, Bradford. Also West Yorkshire Transport Museum rally on the Sunday.

6 July:
London-Shoreham Routemaster event and South Downs rally. Adur recreation ground, Shoreham

13 July:
RT/RF Register running day, Chertsey town centre. Details: 01223 423487.

15 July:
Maidstone Trolleybus System remembered. Slide presentation by Doug and Chris Barrow, Maidstone Library Gallery, St Faith's Street, Maidstone, 19.30. Admission by ticket from the Reference Library, tel: 01622 754980.

27 July:
Worthing Sea Front Fair, with bus rally on closed section of Worthing sea front. Amberley Museum plans to run its Shelvoke & Drewry Tramocar on its original sea front route in Worthing. Details: 01903 520286.

Other events were listed in *Buses* April

The latest in the *Buses Focus* series...

BUSES FOCUS

NUMBER SEVEN

STAGECOACH

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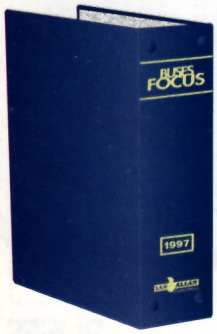

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ON THE MAP

BARRY S DOE AFIMA, MCIT

This month has seen new maps, but I first deal with re-issues. **Cambridgeshire** has published its 1997/8 system map (tel: 01223 717740). From FWT it is unchanged in style, retaining its eight town plans and frequency chart. A first-rate map. Also issued is the **Strathclyde Passenger Transport** 'Visitor Guide' from Pindar (tel: 0141 226 4826) which is a full-colour street-plan of Central Glasgow showing all routes, bus stops and places of interest and with an index, service-list and rail map — and having text in English, French and German. A map of excellent clarity.

Finally come **Walsall** and **Wolverhampton** maps from Centro (tel: 0121 200 2700), produced by FWT to the usual high Centro standard and, from operators, the full system map from **Wilts & Dorset**, from Pindar and this year adding the rail network (tel: 01202 673555).

Turning to new issues, Norfolk, which recently published its first system map, has followed it with a **Norwich** area version (tel: 0500 626116) despite the former having a Norwich inset. Again from Edwards Tattershall Turner this is much more detailed and shows each route with its own colour, which works fairly well as there are not normally too many together. Its weak point, however, is the usual city centre problem where all the colours converge into a circle. Despite the circle being blown up on the same side for ease of reference and despite both circles having street-names shown, they are, in fact, of different geographical sizes — some streets on the full map's circle do not appear on the blow-up, meaning it is impossible to see which streets routes actually use! A major disappointment compared with the excellent system map.

Another county to have a map for the first time is **Somerset** (tel: 01823 358299). Timetable production has been reduced to five comprehensive books and the map has a different background colour to show the area covered by each. From Pindar each route is in green with red numbers for five or more days a week, green for fewer and blue used if summer-only. Railways are added and the actual area shown extends as far as Exeter and Dorchester. The reverse has an index and a frequency chart, subdivided by operator. A high-quality production, this is a most welcome addition.

In Scotland **Stirling Council** has produced a very unusual map. It really is ridiculous to have what are effectively counties named after one town, yet Wales and Scotland now suffer from many such cases. Stirling is by no means what it sounds, for it covers Crianlarich, 45 miles away! The council map has the upper half of one side showing a detailed topographical map of the whole area with relief plus historical notes in English, French and German, and the remainder giving full town plans for Aberfoyle, Balfron, Buchlyvie, Callander, Cowie (yes, that's a town, not a bus group!), Crianlarich, Deanston, Doune, Drymen, Dunblane, Fallin, Fintry, Gargunnock, Killearn, Killin, Kippen, Plean, Stirling (plus a blow-up of the town centre), Strathblane and Thornhill.

Town maps are to the same scale, show all streets, each with a street index. All bus stops are shown. A loose-leaf insert contains a five-column frequency-chart for all services. This is essentially a 'normal map' published by Harvey Map Services to which bus details have been added by the council and it therefore offers a great deal more than most free maps would. It is available for £2.95 post free from the council (tel: 01786 442707) and is a most welcome initiative.

Turning to operators, **Bournemouth Transport** (Yellow Buses) has totally revised its system map (tel: 01202 557272). Still from FWT, it has moved away from a slightly diagrammatic version split between daytime and evenings/Sundays to one showing roads in blue with reversed-out names and with red numbers (black if only evenings/Sundays and green for summer only). A town centre blow-up shows all stops. The reverse has an index and a frequency chart with an interesting addition: a 'corridor guide' giving cumulative frequencies over seven such. The railway is added. I cannot be more parochial as my own road is actually shown, but as a resident I can only indicate I am highly satisfied!

Finally, **Badgerline** has published a new version of one of its diagrammatic maps, this time for Weston-super-Mare town services (tel: 0117 955 3231). From Pindar, one side shows the six routes virtually as long straight lines and all six disappear into a (blank!) box. The other side shows a (different shape) box containing a proper map of the town centre with yellow roads, red route numbers and green bus stop letters. A frequency chart is added. The town plan is perfectly alright — the first side an unhelpful waste of time.

Fortunately Pindar also produces a proper version of the first side in the rear of the actual timetable book, whilst the front of that book also reproduces the town centre plan anyway, so the best thing users can do is throw this map away and buy the excellent book instead. It will cost you 20p but will be well worth it!

THE FENTON FILE

In 1987 Boro'line Maidstone suddenly jumped form being all single-deck to running Britain's biggest double-deckers. They were rather odd, at that, as MIKE FENTON relates

Until the 1970s Maidstone Corporation Transport was a typical municipal operator. Trams ran from 1904 until 1930 and trolleybuses between 1928 and 1967. Tilling-Stevens, chosen from the start of motor bus operation in 1924, were purchased for the best part of ten years augmented by Leylands and followed by Crossleys. During wartime, utility Guy Arabs were taken into the fleet and Daimler CVG6 in the early postwar period but from the mid-fifties Leyland ruled the roost until a change of policy in 1975 saw Maidstone Borough Council, as it had by then become, selecting Bedford for its bus needs.

In 1987 this policy was again to change radically with the arrival of Scanias. Three were East Lancashire-bodied K92CRS; a single-decker with 64-seat bodywork (207) and, remarkably, a pair of double-deckers with 92-seat bodies (212/3) which, at the time of their delivery, were Britain's largest buses.

Their stay was however destined to be short-lived as Boro'line, one of several municipal operators finding life difficult in the harsher deregulated bus industry, finally ceased operations at the end of May 1992. The Scanias, initially acquired by Maidstone & District, were sold later in the same year to Jones of Oakley near Basingstoke for contract work.

Maidstone Boro'line 212 (D212 MKK) utilising its impressive capacity on a school contract in Kent in September 1990.
MIKE FENTON

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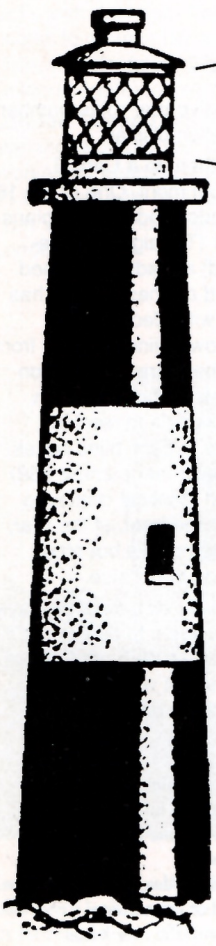

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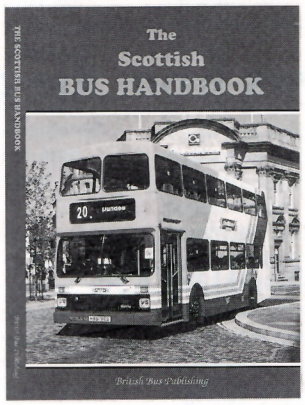

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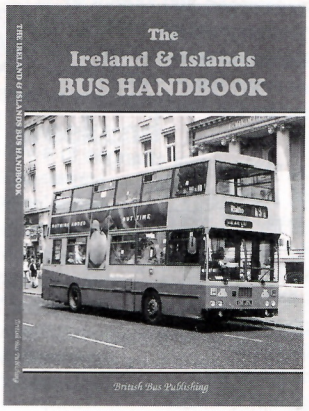

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News from the capital

JOHN ALDRIDGE

New life for short RMs

The news item of the month is undoubtedly the order for 38 Scania engines to be fitted in London Central Routemasters. It is all the more interesting because the buses to be treated are conventional short RMs: the fleet's RMLs were fitted with Cummins engines a few years ago. Presumably much improved reliability is hoped for, since the fleet has 43 RMs, one already with Scania engine, so not every one will be converted. It will be particularly interesting to see if the oldest, RM9, gains a new engine: this bus dates from 1959.

London Central's current contract for the 36 (Lewisham-Queens Park) runs out in the year 2000, so I would guess the company must be reasonably optimistic about winning a further term with Routemasters.

The Scania engines will be the DS9-9TA, a nine-litre conventional six-cylinder unit, unturbocharged and indeed downrated for this application to 115hp. The engines are costing about £8,000 each, and their slightly old-fashioned specification and lack of turbocharging probably make them more suitable for working happily in the rev range wanted by the Routemaster's automatic gearbox and transmission.

Of course, when you make major changes to a vehicle such as fitting a new design of engine you can — sooner or later — find other problems. Such has been the case at Metroline, which has nearly 50 RMLs with Cummins engines. Bearings and seals in the fluid flywheel have not liked the higher engine speeds of the Cummins, so Metroline thought of fitting Voith DIWA flywheels, but they did not fit. However, Voith Engineering of Croydon, found that the older Voith TD coupling could be made to fit. It machined the coupling flywheel housings for two trial installations from solid metal blanks, and results in service apparently exceeded expectations. So far Metroline and other London operators have ordered a total of over 150 couplings.

Still on the subject of Routemasters, LTB itself is slowly disposing of the 30 RMs it has kept as a reserve fleet since 1995. Universitybus at Hatfield houses them, and indeed maintains them, but the numbers are slowly dwindling. MTL London acquired a couple, for use as spares, and London United bought two to meet increased service requirements. More recently, Cowie Leaside has bought four, one of which broke down shortly after leaving Hatfield. That one — RM 385 — has been transferred to Cowie South London, where it is to gain the engine from another RM with severe accident damage. The others acquired are not being worked on by Leaside, though it has refurbished other RMs in the fleet over the last few months.

Space 1999

Something of a 'first' in future predictions accompanies the announcement that Cowie Leaside has retained the contracts to operate four routes for a further five years on net-cost contracts. Two of the routes are 102 (Edmonton Green-Brent Cross) and 221 (Edgware-Turnpike Lane), both operated by Metrobuses. Both will see new double-deck buses introduced by 1999, we are told. Have delivery times on new double-deckers really stretched to 18 months? Or is Leaside trying to avoid buying too many new buses all at once?

The third route retained is 34 (Barnet-Walthamstow), also at present Metrobus-operated. This will see new low-floor single-deckers from November, except that double-deckers will be used for some school journeys. The final route retained is 192 (Enfield-Edmonton), on which the present Dennis Darts will remain. Routes 34, 102 and 221 will all gain increased frequencies from November.

Another successful retender, on a net cost basis, is over at CentreWest, which has retained the 83 (Golders Green-Ealing), on which — we are told — double-deck buses will continue to be used when the contract begins in September. But at present it runs Metrobuses: however, Olympians from the associated London Buslines fleet will replace them.

Another renewal, announced rather later than others in the same tranche, is for Cowie South London to continue running 197 (Croydon-Norwood Junction) on a net cost basis, but just for three years. The short length is no doubt explained by the coming of Tramlink.

50th night route

London now has its 50th night bus route, an event that seems to have passed without comment. The new route is N37 (Peckham-Putney), which began in late April and is the first to go nowhere near central London. It is similar to the daytime 37 and is worked by London General with Metrobuses running hourly.

Also tied in with the success of the expanding network have been changes to the running times of some of the routes. In particular their departure times from central London have been made up to five minutes earlier to cater for the growing numbers of passengers boarding the buses at or near the start of the routes.

The bus you've just missed . . .

Those of us who use buses regularly approve of the LTB's insistence on the fitment of nearside and rear route number displays. But even that is not ideal, as you can run for a bus on your route only to find that it is a short working, not going as far as you want. At present the only exception to all this is the Routemaster, with its comprehensive rear route number and destination display.

All credit then, to a Capital Citybus experiment. One of the 16 new Alexander-bodied Olympians for route 91 (Trafalgar Square-Crouch End) already mentioned and pictured on these pages has been fitted with electrically-operated Powerblinds at both front and rear. There are push-button controls in the cab which send signals to electric motors in each blind boxes. The bus (fleet number 238) has an identical display to that at the front, at the rear, between decks but offset towards the offside.

Generally electronic displays do not seem to be too reliable, so perhaps Citybus's experiment will yield something better.

A welcome sight on a new London bus is this display on one Capital Citybus Olympian/Alexander. Instead of just a route number at the rear it has as much information as on the front.

Know your E numbers

The Marshall-bodied low-floor buses described in the last issue entered service on new LTB Ealing area contracts on 24 May. Operated by CentreWest's Ealing Buses unit, the E3, E7 and E9 use Dennis Darts and the E5, E6 and E10 Marshall Minibuses. The Minibuses were due to enter service in June. Another Ealing route, E1, use refurbished Leyland Olympians on Mondays to Saturdays, and low-floor midibuses on Sundays.

Onward, Christian children

Are you a committed Christian? Can you prove it? These might seem surprising questions of no relevance to this column, or indeed to bus operation. But they are questions that are — amazingly — being asked by the London Borough of Croydon before it issued bus passes to schoolchildren.

Not all schoolchildren, I add, but only some of these going to church schools. The position apparently arises where children, or, rather their parents, opt to send them to church schools rather than more local ones. Going to the church schools in these cases often means travelling further, and over the two or three-mile limit which governs whether children get a free bus pass.

About 1,600 children were expected to be applying for bus passes in Croydon because the church schools were beyond walking distance, but only 129 have received them, and of these 40 only got them after appealing. A further 280 families were rejected outright. Labour-controlled Croydon council's strict conditions have been criticised by the government, by the Catholic Church and by the Church of England.

Children have to be confirmed, and parents are expected to produce certificates showing that the mother or father has attended church at least 40 times a year for each of the last three years.

The Diocese of Southwark wrote to the council saying that becoming a practising member of the Church of England was 'to do with the Holy Spirit, not with bureaucracy' but Croydon is still continuing with its amazing policy.

In brief

A number of Metrobuses in the Cowie Leaside and South London and London General fleets are being fitted with nearside wheel trims incorporating adverts for Mini Baby Bel cheese. They are designed to remain horizontal despite the movement of the wheels.

MTL London has ordered 18 Dart SLFs with dual-door Marshall bodies to replace Routemasters on route 139 (Trafalgar Square-Golders Green) in October.

London General has resumed its evening two-hour tour of London. Worked by Metrobuses it runs until 25 October, with two departures from Victoria and other central London points.

The Heathrow Express rail link from Paddington is expected to begin running in September, to a temporary station at Stockley Park, Hayes. From here buses will shuttle passengers to and from the airport until the rail link is completed: on order for the work for Speedlink Airport Services are 19 DAF SB220 SLFs with Northern Counties Paladin bodies.

Cowie Leaside is buying three low-floor DAFs with Northern Counties bodies to cater for an increased allocation on route 144 (Edmonton Green-Muswell Hill). The route is at present worked with 14 Scania N113CRL low-floor buses with Wright Pathfinder bodies.

Leaside Travel's new maroon, white and blue livery looks particularly striking on its Metrobuses, one of which is seen at Cobham.
JOHN ALDRIDGE

Losers all

A modest route extension from mid May involved London General's 151, extended from Cheam to Worcester Park via route 213. According to the press release the extension followed discussions with the London Borough of Sutton 'and in view of reliability problems encountered on the 213 as a result of road works between Sutton and Worcester Park.'

The extension actually represents a revision to the position before the major Sutton area changes last November. Route 151 had been Wallington-Hackbridge-Sutton-Cheam-Worcester Park, but then lost the section beyond Cheam. At the same time it went from Metrobus operation every 15 minutes to low-floor Dennis Dart operation every 10 minutes. The more frequent, shorter service would ensure more reliable operation, we were told, and parallel route 213 between Worcester Park and Cheam had sufficient capacity to cope with any displaced passengers.

Well, it hasn't worked out, and there has been an enormous volume of complaint with major Sutton employers joining in, on behalf of their staff. So, now back to what was before? Well, no. For, in the words of the latest press release 'the extra costs involved in extending the route . . . will mean the withdrawal of all other journeys between Cheam and Sutton on the 151'.

In plain English, the LTB planning department or somebody is having a sulk and keeping the 151's Wallington-Sutton frequency to every 10 minutes but cutting the Sutton-Cheam frequency to every 20 minutes and indeed running Sutton-Cheam-Worcester Park every 20 minutes. Before the November changes this section was double-deck and every 15 minutes.

I suspect that part of the problem might be the legitimate financial concern of the net-cost operator, in this case London General. For having successfully tendered on a particular basis, it might not want any change that might alter the finances of the route, if it has to put on extra buses and drivers.

But one cannot help thinking that the bus users come off worst. They have to put up with a poorer service for six whole months before their complaints are answered, and when they are answered others further down the route have their service made worse to pay for it.

Have a good weekend

A Mercedes-Benz minibus on a Friday journey is on one of those routes that go all round the houses and back, setting down at street corners and wherever the regulars ask. As people get off, some with shopping, and others obvious commuters, most thank the driver and many wish him a good weekend. An archetypal country bus route, you might think.

But this is London & Country's 301 (Wallington-the Mount-Coulsdon-Croydon) route, a strange mainly urban service running over double-deck bus territory for much of the way.

Through journeys to Croydon are usually Leyland National worked, with Wallington-the Mount-Coulsdon shorts worked by Mercedes minibuses. The Mount is one of those residential areas that is remote from most amenities such as major shops, libraries, railway stations or most other things you can think of. Geographically it has proved difficult to serve, and most attempts have been dubious financially.

It has therefore had more than a fair share of operators over the years. London & Country is about the fifth in my calculations.

The Marshall Minibus demonstrator in its white livery has now been emblazoned with red and orange London General logos for its latest stay in the Sutton area.
JOHN ALDRIDGE

MILLAR'S TALES

ALAN MILLAR'S monthly column of miscellaneous items

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO . . . ?

. . . the Dennis Arrow

It's a year since we carried a full appraisal of the Dennis Arrow, the longitudinally-engined 10.5 metre double-decker launched to succeed the long-running Dominator. This was the vehicle developed from the Lance single-decker and fitted with a Cummins C-Series engine.

At the time, Dennis had taken orders for 16 from Nottingham, London & Country, Aintree Coachlines and a playbus operation in Suffolk, but was talking of selling 100 in its first year. We were surprisingly impressed by how well the Lance translated itself into a double-decker that didn't feel like an adapted single-decker, even if we were a little unsure of the seating layout and headroom in the back of the bottom deck. So how well has it sold since then?

While Dennis has broken every record in the book with the Dart SLF, it's still struggling to re-establish itself in the double-deck market. Indeed, its most significant success so far has been to secure orders for 25 from Capital Citybus. Nottingham's most recent orders have included a rediscovered enthusiasm for the mid-engined Volvo Citybus, rather than the Arrow, and the Cowie takeover of British Bus may not have done the Arrow too many favours at London & Country as corporate policy seems likely to favour the new low-floor Optare Spectra double-decker being sold by fellow Cowie company Hughes-DAF.

But Dennis has proved itself resourceful in the past and I'd be surprised if we've heard anything like the last of the Arrow just yet.

Election postscript

For those of you who sat up into the early hours of 2 May, one of the more memorable sights of the general election was the slanging match at Putney between the defeated David Mellor and the utterly routed Referendum Party leader Sir James Goldsmith.

Now this isn't the place in which to air political prejudices, but maybe the Referendum Party let itself down by its choice of campaign buses. For while the three main contenders toured the country in various flash forms of executive luxury coach known, alliteratively, as battle buses, I encountered the Referendum Party's Peter de Savary in Falmouth with nothing more grand than this London DMS. It seems even the traffic warden wanted it shifted out of town.

The Referendum Party's DMS2257 (OUC 257R) obviously did little to help the party's case at the General Election; even this Falmouth traffic warden seems unimpressed.

Cast not the first stone, but on the other hand . . .

It's a dangerous business for a journalist to draw attention to colleagues' mistakes, for someone is bound then to discover an unintentional howler of one's own. So let me get in with a pre-emptive strike, for some of you may have hit upon last month's advertisement for Doe's Directory of Bus Timetables in our small ads column. We weren't really ahead of the game on the forthcoming Scottish parliament when we quoted a price outside Europe of £6 (Stirling). The price, we're assured, holds good on Sterling cash exchanged in Swansea, Salisbury, Sunderland or anywhere else in the UK.

So, having owned up to that one, I feel better able to share with you my amusement on receiving a London General press release the other day, explaining why its Volvo B10Bs were being transferred within the Go Ahead group (or the 'large Let's Go group' as *The Times* called it in May) to Oxford. Their departure from route 88, the press release tells me, ends a 'four-year experimental period of four metre single-deck operation'. Compressed to one third of what we all thought was their original length, no wonder the 40-seat Volvos proved unsuitable for what the company says was the heavy passenger demand prevalent on the service — not to mention their problems negotiating tight corners in the Millbank Estate.

Wuthering Heights bus hits new depths

The hapless folk at Metro, the West Yorkshire PTE, are in bother again. These are the people who, you may recall from my May column, published Easter timetables promising a Northern Bus operation on Good Friday of 'no service with slight peak reductions'. From what I can gather from our old friend Geoff Lumb, these are but a flavour of some strange publications that show the occasional non-existent route and incorrect intermediate destinations.

But, according to a recent edition of *The Times*, Metro is in deeper trouble with one Robert Stanton, a semi-retired botany professor who has taken the organisation to court over the non-appearance of a tendered bus service. It seems that Dr Stanton visited the Brontë museum at Haworth parsonage last March and then waited two hours in what one can well imagine was a biting moorland wind before realising that the advertised minibus to his home village of Stanbury wasn't going to show up.

He wants his £2.80 taxi fare to be refunded and for Metro to stump up his £10 court costs. Metro, no doubt fearing that a judgment against it could open the floodgates for similar claims against PTEs, county councils and operators themselves, is fighting the claim and says it cannot be responsible for operator Calder Coaches' failure to run the route at the advertised times.

Dr Stanton is having none of it. 'The bus times are a shambles. They don't know how to work a transport system,' he says.

Less Bovva for hounding hijackers

After being caught out the other month by Mike Clarke's humanoid — and humanitarian — Children In Need bear, I ought to be well warned that the old adage of actors avoiding performances with animals or children also applies to *Buses* columnists. But I was unable to resist John Marsh's shot of the canine driver (called 'Rova' surely) of a Bova Futura in Newbury.

He wonders if this is ultimate proof that coach driving truly is a dog's life, but I fancy it might also be the early British adoption of a Californian practice reported recently in the pages of *The Independent*. According to a Reuter's report, a hijacker in San Diego held up a bus at knifepoint and ordered the driver across the city. Police gave chase, stopped the bus and persuaded the suspect to get off. So far, so good. But the police driver was so preoccupied with the thrill of events that he forgot to apply the handbrake when he stepped out of his patrol car. His dog then climbed across and set the car in motion — straight into the path of the hijacker who was knocked to the ground. Think of what this little chap could do with the Bova.

A fine and apt tribute

While driving along the M11 on a couple of occasions recently, I've found myself passing what I assume to be Cambridge Coach Services' latest Plaxton-bodied Volvo en route to or from the London airports.

In case the bus industry's more recent changes have passed you by, CCS is the most recognisable survivor of the once revered Premier Travel and it's a healthy revenue earner for still-independent Blazefield Holdings. It also maintains a Premier tradition by naming its coaches after some of the Cambridge University colleges.

But the reason this latest coach has caught my eye is that the company has named it after Ian Roberts, CCS's managing director from the company's formation in 1990 until his very sad and untimely death in May, aged 52. Ian, who was MD of Premier under AJS ownership and who was with the National Bus Company before that, was one of the most likeable busmen, or coachmen, in the business. An unassuming, friendly figure who clearly had the respect of his staff as well as his peers. And a brave man, too, for he had undergone a kidney transplant some years ago before returning to the hurly burly of managing a thriving round-the-clock coach company.

My fellow directors of *Classic Bus* had cause to be particularly grateful to Ian last September when our plans to hire a Leyland National mobile sales unit at Showbus were dashed sometime between the eleventh and twelfth hours by a serious technical fault. In near desperation, we turned to Ian, whom we thought had a company caravan on his fleet, and were delighted to learn that, yes, he did still have it and that of course he'd be delighted to help us out. I, for one, will always remember that gesture for as long as his memorial coach beats its way from Cambridge to Gatwick.

Ian Roberts, Cambridge Coach Services' managing director until his untimely death in May.

More fossils

A few months back, I marvelled at the bus industry fossil of an abandoned Midland Scottish travel shop in Perth, more than a decade after Midland had ceased being that city's local operator. Now I offer another example, this time from the very home of the fossil.

People flock to Lyme Regis in search of them. For well over a century, enterprising west Dorset retailers have been selling millions-of-years-old life forms preserved in rock. The town's little museum is full of them and visitors comb the shore in hopes of finding their own.

So it's entirely appropriate that there's also a bus industry fossil in Lyme. Not a million years old, mark you. More like a dozen. Southern National, whose Mercedes 811s run hourly to Taunton, Bridport and sometimes to Weymouth and which also runs a Ford Transit to heaven-knows-where thanks to a destination blind set permanently to show the operator's name, still masquerades as part of the National Bus Company.

To be fair to Southern National, it has stamped a newer identity across much of its fleet and supporting infrastructure, but one bus stop outside Lyme post office remains unchanged from the days before March 1988 when NBC's double-N was more common than today's flying *f* and Sch! You Know Who's stripes, and Southern National was a rather grander sounding organisation than it is today. Doubtless, I can rely on eagle-eyed readers to find other examples of the supposedly extinct 'N-sign'.

ENQUIRE WITHIN

The tachograph

Twenty and more years ago, the tachograph was one of the most emotive issues in British road transport. Lambasted by trades unions as 'the spy in the cab' and by employers as an unnecessary expense, it was an inevitable price to be paid for joining what then was the European Economic Community and today is the European Union.

Most of the protests were from the road haulage industry, but coach and bus operators were hardly leaping up and down with joy at the thought of its introduction to these shores. So what was this dreaded device that today is an accepted feature of all coaches and any buses likely to be used for private hires and other work governed by European rather than domestic driving rules?

It's a fairly crude (by today's standards) recording device that records the distance travelled, the speed, driving time, other periods of work or attendance at work by the driver, breaks from work and any occasion when the machine has been opened to inspect the record sheet. The information is recorded on a paper chart that rotates around the tachograph to record when things happen. It works a bit like a seismograph used to record earth tremors as a needle traces the vehicle's progress.

The tachograph must be calibrated and sealed before a vehicle goes into service, to make sure that it records the information accurately, and it must be recalibrated every six years or as soon as it is repaired or replaced. In addition, the unit must be inspected every two years. Calibration and inspection can only be carried out at centres approved by the Department of Transport.

The tachograph then becomes evidence of whether or not a driver has abided by the rules governing the number of hours that he or she may work. The driver has to sign and date the chart, showing where the journey begins and ends, and should change charts at least every 24 hours. Drivers should return their charts to their employer within 21 days of their use and the employer should keep them for at least a year, in case an inspecting officer needs to examine them.

Tachograph charts can be used as evidence after an accident or as part of a driver's defence against a speeding charge.

The EU is now examining proposals for a more compact electronic recording device to replace the tachograph, but nothing has yet been agreed by member governments.

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Thames Transit

One of the few newcomers after deregulation to continue to provide sustained competition in an urban area is Thames Transit in Oxford. ALAN MILLAR looks at the operator as it celebrated 10 years in the business

The negative images of bus deregulation seem easy to summon to mind. Dramatic reductions in bus use in the big English cities, tit-for-tat wars between operators fighting for one another's territory, streets jammed with queues of half-empty, superannuated ex-PTE Atlanteans going nowhere in a competitive hurry. I could go on.

Above:
The early Ford Transits were followed by larger Mercedes-Benz 709Ds with Reeve Burgess Beaver 25-seat bodies, like No 301 (E301 BWL), seen when new in 1988 on the Oxford-Aylesbury service.
KEVIN LANE

Some of the images are true. Some are merely perceptions and others are but images of the short-lived actions of executives inexperienced in the arts of commercial competition. But they obscure some of our perceptions of deregulation's notable successes, not least of the remarkable growth of bus patronage in Oxford where competition has been sustained over the 10 years since Thames Transit first took to the road.

It's difficult pinning anyone down hard enough to get an objective figure of how much the market for bus travel has grown over the past 10 years in England's oldest university city, but it could be by anything from 35% to 70% as the frequencies and hours of operation of commercial services have increased, the two main operators' fleets have been updated and some tendered services have been turned commercial. It's the best example of what the promoters of bus deregulation wanted us to believe would happen right across the country.

The reasons for this unique success are complex. Partly the history of Oxford being an ancient city in which it isn't easy or cheap to use or, more to the point, park a car. Partly the geography of the city being surrounded by some sizeable commuter towns. Partly also the demographics of a city with a huge (25,000 to 30,000) student population, many of whom live beyond comfortable walking or cycling distance of its places of learning and entertainment. And partly the economics of this also being an industrial city with a population of less affluent residents living in concentrations on its outer edges.

That adds up to what we like to call 'good bus territory', but good bus territories often are good bus monopolies. Oxford brought an equally important mix of bus industry chemistry to the deregulation laboratory which ignited the flames of competition.

The wind of change and the Blundred Factor

Back in National Bus Company days, the city and surrounding countryside were served by City of Oxford Motor Services which traded in the 'seventies and early-eighties as Oxford-South Midland. And in 1979, there descended on the company a new traffic manager by the name of Harry Blundred. People who bothered to read NBC's potted biographies learned that he had begun his career as a conductor at PMT, but in the hierarchy of multi-layered NBC, traffic managers didn't rate much as celebrities.

Then a wind of change began blowing through the cobwebs and the big NBC fleets started to be broken up into more locally responsive units. In January 1983, Western National was chopped in four and the Devon General bit was put under the charge of a promising young manager on the first rung of general managership or managing directorship. Harry Blundred, of course.

More than that, John Hargreaves, the NBC southern regional director and the brains behind the break-up of the big fleets, persuaded Harry Blundred to run an experiment in Exeter which would break the mould of the industry's thinking. Instead of squeezing a declining passenger base into less frequent big buses, he was to try offering the same number of seats at a higher frequency using 16-seat Ford Transits. The minibus era dawned in February 1984 and patronage started to climb. An initially sceptical Harry Blundred became the minibus's most zealous missionary.

As an unashamed Conservative supporter (this was the man who later dismissed London Transport as a haven of crypto-Stalinists), he was also greatly excited by the prospect of deregulation and competition and, in August 1986, led the first management buy-out of an NBC company in the privatisation programme. Devon General became the founding part of Transit Holdings and was hungry for opportunities elsewhere.

Meanwhile, John Hargreaves's scalpel had been at work in Oxfordshire, giving COMS — or the Oxford Bus Company as it subsequently styled itself — the routes in Oxford from the

Cowley Road depot in the city, while South Midland took on the surrounding depots. These companies also were bought by their managers, 70-vehicle South Midland in December 1986 and the bigger Oxford Bus fleet (for which a still largely unknown Scottish company called Stagecoach was widely understood to have put in a competitive bid) a month later.

One day while all these deals were being sewn together, Harry Blundred was back in Oxford with an hour-and-a-half to spare and, after standing in Cowley for 35 minutes waiting for a bus that never came, realised he might be staring at Transit Holdings' first new business opportunity. He and his then wife, Janet (now Janet Jeffery) formed Thames Transit to tackle a market they knew well and to compete in a manner they then imagined would be adopted in most major towns and cities. Quality bus companies, they assumed, would vie for the public's custom in the same way as there were no cosy monopolies for supermarket chains.

A twin-pronged attack

Today, Thames Transit has 175 vehicles but, when it started running on 7 March 1987, there were just 20 — 12 Ford Transits and an octet of mid-life Leyland Tiger coaches cascaded from Devon General. They would mount a twin-pronged attack on two of Oxford Bus's big money earners, routes which to an extent were also inter-dependent.

The Transits were scheduled every four minutes on the goldmine route between the city centre and Blackbird Leys — a sometimes notorious housing estate which contains Oxford's largest concentration of council housing — on which Oxford Bus advertised a six minute service. The Tigers inaugurated the half-hourly Oxford Tube, a quality challenger for the thrice-hourly City Link coach service from Oxford to London. It took someone with inside knowledge to know that the coach service relied partly on through ticketing from passengers beginning their journeys on local buses and that the local buses benefited from passengers who caught the coach from London.

Neither venture was an instant success. It took time for the Oxford public to accept that minibuses were for real and to resist the duplicate journeys that Oxford Bus put on to Blackbird Leys.

The coach service had an even worse start. What another sort of organisation would have called the wrong type of snow fell on the launch day, but that was only an omen. To avoid the expense of Victoria Coach Station's departure charges, the Tube terminated at Marble Arch Underground station where passengers could catch London's better known Tube, a reasonable proposition if every coach got that far. But lax management, it seems, meant that not every coach completed its journey and lewd legend has it that some drivers and hostesses disappeared together into motels en route for illicit liaisons.

Squeezing the Tube

The Tube was in danger of going down the tubes until Janet Jeffery squeezed it into shape. She spent weeks riding on the route to see what was happening and to make sure that the services ran as advertised. And she has

Left:
Thames Transit's 391 service links Oxford and London, covering the main towns en route, as well as Heathrow Airport where No 14 (N203 CUD), a 1995 Mercedes-Benz 711D with Marshall 28-seat bodywork is seen when new.
P R WALLIS

Below:
Passengers enjoy the sun at Oxford's Gloucester Green bus station with three Oxford Tube Volvo B10Ms with Berkhof Excellence 49-seat bodies, Nos 9/16/25 (M103-5 XBW).
DANIEL HILL

redoubled efforts ever after to recruit drivers of the calibre of reliable, customer-friendly individuals needed to make the business grow. The fleet has also been updated and expanded, with regular intakes of Volvo B10Ms with Berkhof, Jonckheere and (when available) Ikarus bodies — all fitted with toilets and some with extras like on-board telephones. The oldest vehicles now are six-year-old ex-Wallace Arnold Plaxton Paramounts.

As part of the revamp she instituted, the route was extended to its present London terminus at Grosvenor Gardens, opposite Victoria railway station. For some passengers, this is more convenient than the coach station and, although the Oxford Tube still misses out on the business generated by day trippers calling into the coach station, it picks up many others who come out of Victoria Underground station and encounter its coaches before they bother to trek down Buckingham Palace Road for the rival service.

When Thames Transit started, some people questioned whether the market could sustain two operators running 80 departures a day between them on the London route. Today, Oxford Tube alone offers 85 departures and City Link another 65. Thames Transit — which insists its policy is to run frequent buses and coaches rather than necessarily use small vehicles — was determined to reduce the gaps between departures. By late-1988, it was running every 20 minutes, from April 1993 it started running round the clock and it was running up to every 10 minutes at busy times by 1994.

More than just that, the 10-minute service has gradually been moved back to start earlier in the morning. Currently, it starts at 06.00 and, by 06.30, executive assistant David Whitley says there can be queues of 60 people waiting for London coaches at the Thornhill park and ride car park on the east side of Oxford. Traffic has come from a variety of sources; 'Some people used to drive to London by car', he says. 'Some have switched to the Tube from Oxford Bus as we have regularly introduced new vehicles and other people have moved to us from rail. Our yearly season ticket is £700, while the rail ticket costs around £2,700. Our day return in the peak is £7. It's £29 by rail.'

Against that, peak hour journeys take anything from two to two-and-a-half hours, depending on whether traffic conditions on the M40 and A40 into London are bad or dreadful, but door-to-door journey times compare favourably with what is possible by train and Underground.

Now that the rail service is controlled by Go Ahead, which bought Oxford Bus in 1994, competition may step up — especially as Go Ahead has a marketing advantage of being able to promote its rail and coach services on its London Central and London General buses in the capital.

But Thames Transit says the Oxford Tube is still growing. A 10-minute peak hour service through the village of Lewknor, next to Junction 6 on the M40, was so successful that the village became flooded with commuters parked cars. Thames Transit had tried promoting the stop as a 'kiss-&-ride' facility where wives or husbands would drop off their partners and collect them again in the evening, but it became an unofficial park-&-ride until the local council had parking restrictions introduced. Now, there's a feeder coach in from Watlington to try and counteract the problem and retain the business and David Whitley says similar links may follow from other local towns and villages.

Back on the buses

Expansion of bus services came fairly soon after the launch of the Blackbird Leys service, as Harry Blundred reasoned that his competitor would be less able to hit back if it was being fought on several fronts. More Transits moved in as routes were established to other parts of the city, but the biggest coup followed during 1988 when South Midland

Above:
A reminder of Thames Transit's roots - 1987 Ford Transit/Mellor 16-seater No 137 (D137 PTT) in Oxford in May 1996.
ALAN MILLAR

Right:
Thames Transit moved up to 9.8m Dennis Darts for the 24hr Blackbird Leys service, now branded The Blackbird Flyer. Like No 3001 (L710 JUD), these have 37-seat two-door Plaxton Pointer bodies.
ALAN MILLAR

was taken over. This brought a mixture of double-deckers and 25-seaters into the fleet, along with depots in Witney and Wantage and routes as far south as Didcot. The depots and the big buses all were sold off, replaced by new Mercedes 709Ds based in Oxford and running on higher frequencies than before.

The former South Midland routes are probably more interurban than rural, linking Oxford with surrounding market towns and passing through areas in between with more open fields and farms than any housing to speak of. But, compared with most parts of the country, they are refreshingly frequent — every 10 or 15 minutes to Bicester or Witney, every seven minutes to Abingdon. South Midland, at best, ran a bus every half hour and would never have dreamt of last buses to Didcot at 03.45!

In the city, Thames Transit runs even more frequently on some routes, operates commercially from 06.00 to midnight every day including Sunday and at least every 20 minutes through the night on the Blackbird Leys and Kidlington routes. It believes people like shift workers or night clubbers won't be persuaded to use night services if they only run every hour and, in the company's experience, the additional cost of running a bus for 24 hours isn't that great. And there is a waiting list of drivers volunteering to work nights.

Operators in other parts of the country might like to note that Thames Transit finds its daytime buses are only 20% quieter on a Sunday than they are during the rest of the week.

Although there still are Ford Transits in the Thames Transit fleet, they are fast disappearing as the Plaxton-bodied Dennis Dart becomes the standard vehicle. David Whitley explains that this is largely because of the growth in business on most of the routes. 'Minibuses started off as a perfect way to get into the market. Harry Blundred's had already proved that minibus frequencies attracted custom in Exeter, and in Oxford they had other benefits like getting past parked cars in places such as Blackbird Leys. They also didn't need the same driving licence standard which was useful at the start when recruiting drivers. And, with an incumbent operator also running, there was no fear of people being left stranded at the roadside.'

But by 1988/89, he says the Transits were struggling and most were replaced by larger Mercedes vehicles which were robust, but seemed better suited to country services. In 1992, they were replaced by Ivecos fitted with two-door bodies in response to an agreement with the city council that fast-flow buses be used in order to encourage more people to leave their cars at home. Despite this feature, fare collection on Thames Transit services still seems slow, but the Ivecos had more serious drawbacks, with leaks through the destination boxes causing ticket machines to fail regularly. They became unpopular with drivers and many were moved to Devon in 1994, a good year or more before that part of Transit Holdings was sold to Stagecoach.

Darts were bought first for the Blackbird Leys route which was rebranded as the Blackbird Flyer as part of an exercise which acknowledges — as with the Oxford Tube — that names are better remembered than numbers and which also creates opportunities for community sponsorship and advertising. Today, there also are routes branded as City Cavalier, Carousel (a circular route which has been turned round since Thames Transit took it over from Oxford Bus), Rose Hill Runner and Witney Weaver. Some unbranded buses are kept as spares, so that wrongly branded vehicles aren't used.

For the same reason, the separate Kidlington Cavalier service has been rebranded as City Cavalier to reduce unnecessary duplication of resources. Other short-lived brands have gone, like Marston Pony, Wood Farm Woodman and, most memorable of all, the Park and Glide contravision livery for the park-&-ride service discontinued since recent battles with Oxford Bus have calmed down again.

The move to Darts made sense for other reasons. It's questionable whether an even higher frequency would bring in sufficient business to justify the cost and, in any case, with a doubled requirement for professional bus drivers compared with 1987, driver turnover is high and recruitment goes on continuously. David Whitley says the Darts also overcome passenger resistance to smaller vehicles. 'This was the perfect bus for us. It was reasonably priced and Janet Jeffery also liked the look of them.' In Blackbird Leys, he says the branding went down a storm. 'People there liked the sign we were giving them of being proud to run into Blackbird Leys. And the buses got over the anti-minibus stigma. People in Oxford had got used to large buses and they don't like Transits. They don't want to ride in a community transport type of vehicle. The traditional Oxford bus customer seems to like double-deckers. The car user is impressed by our frequency and wants something comfortable. We needed to encourage more people to use the bus who didn't need to. The Darts have improved our standing locally because people realised we were a real bus company with a real future.'

Most of the Darts are two-door 37-seaters, but there are a few one-door 40-seaters and a couple of UVG-bodied vehicles (previously operated by East Devon) were on hire in the spring. There also are three oddballs in the fleet, 12 metre Dennis Lances with 49-seat Plaxton Verde bodies. They came in the middle of last year at an attractive price, ostensibly to replace Leyland Tiger buses on the Woodstock route but also to perform useful extra duties like crowd shifting at the Henley Regatta. Had they not been available, Thames Transit would more likely have increased the frequency to Woodstock and bought Darts instead.

Next in line for replacement will be the rural Mercedes 709Ds which seem likely to be succeeded by secondhand Darts from a source yet to be disclosed.

So far, all the Darts have been step-entrance models and neither of the Oxford companies has yet bought a low-floor bus. From Thames Transit's point of view, it can live happily without them as it believes the market has grown so much that the traffic generation apparently being achieved elsewhere with low-floor buses might not occur in Oxford. It also fears that the main increase in ridership would be by elderly people with travel passes, so low-floor buses might have less space for passengers paying full fares. Besides, says David Whitley, the councils have no intention of helping with the extra cost. But David Whitley says it accepts that, sooner or later, step entrance Darts will no longer be built. He also predicts that when either Thames Transit or Oxford Bus starts buying Dart SLFs, the other will follow as neither will want to be left behind with a less friendly brand image.

Following the sales of Transit Holdings' Devon and Portsmouth operations last year, Harry Blundred was concentrating his efforts, as group chairman, on setting up services in Australia. Janet Jeffery chairs Thames Transit and her new husband, Paul Jeffery, is managing director. His responsibilities extend to Docklands Transit which began life in 1989 on commercial routes in east London that fell foul of London Transport's reluctance to undermine its tendered network.

Today, Docklands Transit runs 48 vehicles, a mix of Mercedes 811Ds, Darts and Ford Transits, on tendered routes and a long-standing staff contract with Reuters. It provides a level of steady income stream to complement the potentially more volatile market in Oxford.

Thames Transit fleet, May 1997

5	Ford Transit	16-seat
35	Mercedes	25-seat
8	Mercedes	29-seat
6	Mercedes	28-seat
12	Mercedes	33-seat
8	Iveco	26-seat
65	Dennis Dart	
3	Dennis Lance	
33	Volvo B10M coaches	

Left:
The Oxford Tube competes for traffic between Oxford and London with The Oxford Bus Company's Citylink service.
ALAN MILLAR

SEEING THE SIGHTS OF LONDON

Each new season is guaranteed to bring new vehicles and liveries on to the plethora of London sightseeing tours that vie for the tourist's pound. These are some of the 1997 offerings.

Right:
One fleet still using former London Fleetlines is The Big Bus Company. At Deans Yard, Westminster, in April is OJD 412R.
G. B. WISE

Below:
In the shadow of the Underground roundel, London Coaches MCW Metrobus GYE 558W, formerly Leaside M558, at Baker Street station in April.
G. B. WISE

Inset:
Still running with its roof intact in March, London Pride 114 (BOK 68V), a 1980 ex-West Midlands Travel MCW Metrobus, in Trafalgar Square.
P. R. WALLIS

For the Original tour, London Coaches has been buying quantities of MCW Metrobuses from various sources. The former Leaside M185 (BYX 185V) is seen at Cannon Street in April.
G. B. WISE

London Pride has recently placed into service several former London Buses Leyland Titans. No.352 (A860 SUL), in Cityrama colours, is on London Bridge.
RUSSELL UPCRAFT

LOW RENOWN

STEPHEN MORRIS looks at the newest product in Wright's low-floor line-up

If 'Renown' conjures up visions of AEC double-deckers, then 'Floline' might sound almost like the name of a Dennis of which the second AEC Renown was an equivalent. If all that means nothing at all to you, be thankful for your youth and be content to know that Renown is the name for the latest low-floor bus body from Wright of Ballymena while Floline refers to the concept by which the Renown is built, and by which other Wright products look set to be built in future.

In broad terms the Renown is a new full-size single-decker. It hardly needs stating that it is low-floor, because following its pioneering efforts with the Pathfinder, on Dennis Lance SLF and Scania N113 chassis, Wright immediately saw the future as being in low-floor buses and now builds little else. It attracted a certain amount of cynicism when it nailed its colours to the mast, but has proved itself right; the low-floor bus is now nearly universal for new deliveries. Like all Wright bodies built since 1980 the Renown uses Alusuisse bolted aluminium construction, and Wright reckons it is now the biggest user of the Alusuisse system worldwide.

It takes a keen eye to tell one Wright body from the next; not only does this give a strong family resemblance across the range, whether the underpinnings are a Dennis Dart, Scania L113 or various vehicles in the Volvo range, it also means that most parts are common to the range. The immediate visual clue which sets the Renown apart is that unlike other full-size low-floor buses (though in common with the Crusader on the Dennis Dart) it has gasket glazing. In this respect it is considered unique; apparently there is no other full-size low-floor bus anywhere without bonded glazing. Wright is not convinced that British bus operators want bonded glazing; costs for window replacement are four times what they are for gasket glazing, without considering the additional downtime required for adhesives to cure, while in the event of several windows being broken — sadly not uncommon in vandalism attacks — the whole vehicle needs realigning where bonded glass forms part of the structure.

Floline

The gasket glazing is an essential part of the Floline concept; the other part is the fact that the floor is gently ramped from front to rear. Incredible though it may seem, the two aspects are closely linked; the ramped floor makes the gasket glazing possible. The fact is that bonded glazing has been considered essential to replace the structural integrity that is missing through having to use very slim underframe members to create a low-floor bus. So far only the Dennis Dart has had sufficient structural integrity without requiring bonded glazing, enabling all builders of bodywork on the old-style Dart to body it without substantial modification.

On the Renown, and other Floline vehicles, Wrights inserts a steel framework within the wheelbase, joining the front and rear chassis modules and forming a shallow triangle or, as Wright design director Trevor Erskine describes it, a 'wedge of cheese'. The underside is horizontal, the upper forms the ramp of the floor and the whole adds sufficient structural integrity to enable the bonded glazing to be dispensed with. Without that integrity the vehicle is liable to bend around the area where the low-floor section meets the high rear end, and, according to Trevor Erskine, would end up looking like a bridge in Venice.

Meanwhile the ramped floor also deals with the problem of the untidy internal layout which was a hallmark of early low-floor buses. Looking back at those pioneering London Pathfinders, the interiors are not ideal, especially on the Scania version, which starts off with a nice low platform and gradually ascends through various levels until rear seat passengers end up perched several feet up in the air. Low-floor buses have come a long way since then, and in a way it is ironic that the Dart, probably the cheapest 'mainstream' low-floor bus, has one of the most satisfactory internal layouts.

Having a ramped floor the Renown manages with just one step up in the gangway, ahead of the rear axle, and it also gets round the effect of having passengers in the rear towering over those in the front. Sit on the back seat, which has just enough headroom for a six footer, and you will be aware that the front seats are a lot lower. Sit in the front half, however, and you will scarcely notice that passengers behind are higher up. That sense of claustrophobia which beset so many early generation low-floor buses, is long gone.

Critics may be dismayed at the concept of a low-floor bus with a ramped floor, but the ramp is only 2.1° and is not very noticeable and access is good. It also means that passengers can move back along the bus without encountering a step yet can

travel without that sense of being terribly close to the ground.

The Floline concept is not to remain unique to the Renown; indeed the Scania-based Axcess-ultralow is apparently next in line and has already appeared in a Wright brochure as the Axcess-Floline. Now that the new Scania L94 has been announced (see 'News', last month) it would seem reasonable to presume that the Axcess-Floline will be based on the L94 to replace the Axcess-ultralow on the L113.

Under the floor

So far we haven't mentioned the chassis under the Renown. It is in fact Volvo's latest offering, the B10BLE, which has been quite a long time coming. It isn't the first Volvo B10BLE to appear in Britain; that honour goes to one of the five Stagecoach Manchester vehicles with Northern Counties' new body, which went into service with little fuss or fanfare in March. Now however Volvo has released details of its new model.

As expected the Volvo B10BLE is an amalgam of the B10L and the B10B. It comes as a short chassis, for bodybuilders to separate and integrate into their products, with the rear end of the B10B, complete with horizontal Volvo 9.6litre DH10A engine and ZF or Voith gearbox. The major difference between this and the rear end of the B10L is that it has a straightforward driveline, with a straight rear axle with conventional centre portal, in place of the clever offset driveline and dropped-centre rear axle which theoretically give the B10L a full-length low-floor gangway. The front end is pure B10L with independent suspension. Wright separates the two halves and inserts its triangulated steel section between them. According to Trevor Erskine it '. . . replicates the stiff structure of previous generations of conventional chassis frames' and builds in strength exactly where it is needed.

The Volvo DH10A engine is rated at 245bhp at 2,000rpm and uses Electronic Diesel Control to conform with Euro 2 emissions regulations and to give road speed limiting. A catalytic convertor is available as an option. The standard gearbox is the ZF 5HP500 five-speed automatic with integral retarder and overdrive (0.8:1) top speed. Options are the four-speed 4HP500 and Voith three-speed D863.3, both of which have a direct-drive top. Three axle ratios are available, ranging from 5.43:1 which gives a top speed of 40mph with the direct-drive gearboxes (50mph with the 5HP500) to 4.25:1 giving 61mph with the 5HP500, 10mph less with the other gearboxes.

At the front is fully independent suspension, with unequal wishbones, high-mounted air bags and single shock absorbers. Kneeling is standard, with electronic control. Indeed Volvo has now announced that all future citybus production will have independent front suspension as standard. No doubt the B10L/B10BLE-style set up will feature on Volvo's forthcoming low-floor double-decker; indeed the suspension system is derived from the Leyland Titan and will therefore no doubt suit a double-deck application. Less clear is what will happen with the B6LE; a Volvo spokesman was enigmatic when pressed on that point.

Disc brakes feature at the front, air-actuated with asbestos-free pads, though conventional drum brakes are fitted at the rear.

On the road

The Volvo B10BLE proved a spirited performer, with excellent acceleration. Brakes and steering were, as one might expect of a Volvo, near flawless, though just a little more weight on the steering would have suited this writer's tastes, especially as Volvo's standard steering wheel seems unnecessarily large these days. The retarder dealt with most braking requirements, though foundation brakes were positive yet progressive. Ride quality was similar to the excellent standard set by the B10L, though the B10BLE seemed noisier and not quite up to the superb level of refinement of the B10L. Noise levels remained fairly constant throughout the bus; it seemed noisier than one might expect at the front, though quieter at the rear. It did however have a rather noisy blower for Wright's roof-level heating and ventilation system, which didn't help.

One little problem we did encounter was that the floor on the brand new bus was just a little on the slippery side; it was not enough to affect most passengers, but a wheelchair-bound passenger tended to slide around a bit if corners were taken too enthusiastically. That is our excuse for unsettling a wheelchair-bound passenger, and we're sticking to it! Wheelchair access is aided by a new manual ramp which Wright has developed, which folds out from the top of the platform. As well as being inexpensive, the mounting of the ramp inside the bus means it is less susceptible to damage and dirt ingress.

We were still not entirely convinced by the Callow & Maddox Urban 7 seats, on which we have commented before in the context of new Wright vehicles; they look well enough with their individual mouldings, built-in handrails and bright moquette, but are unyielding. Allowing full DiPTAC specification, with one double and one single tip-up seats for a wheelchair and pushchair space there is room for 41 seats, plus 25 standing, though up to 47 seats can be accommodated by compromising on the DiPTAC specification. The vehicle is a full 12m long. Internally the Renown prototype was trimmed with conventional laminate trim.

The Renown looks set to become a common sight reasonably quickly; FirstBus is to take 102 out of its order for 247 Wright bodies in its 1997-99 order, the first 52 to be split between Greater Manchester (which already has the B10L-based Wright Liberator), Bristol, Calderline and Northampton. Also ordered are an initial 10 for Travel West Midlands, to follow on from the 100 Liberators currently in build — themselves following 65 Endurances on B10B — and Blazefield, also a keen user of Endurances on Volvo B10B, is expected to order about 10.

Although simpler than the B10L, the price differential is surprisingly slight; there is only about 2-3% in it on chassis price. Nevertheless the simpler approach of the B10BLE/Renown would seem to have potentially lower whole life costs and makes an attractive package which overcomes many of the objections to low-floor buses. Wright's innovations and perseverance in the low-floor field have certainly paid off to the advantage of passengers everywhere.

Opposite:
The new Wright Renown on the Volvo B10BLE. It is claimed to be the only full-size low-floor bus without bonded glazing; additional strength is built into the vehicle using Wright's new Floline technique to avoid the need for it.

Left:
The neat interior of the Renown; the gently-ramped floor means that only one step is needed to the rear saloon.

Though Stagecoach's expansion in Britain in 1995-96 was very rapid, the pace has slowed down. However its biggest recent acquisition is Swebus, based in Sweden though with operations throughout Scandinavia. Not much has been reported on this subject so far, so GAVIN BOOTH has been to Sweden to find out more

STAGECOACH IN SWEDEN

You have to look hard to find Stagecoach's buses in Sweden. That's not because there are only a few of them — in fact there are 3,200 — but because the majority of the buses run by its recently-acquired subsidiary, Swebus, carry the colours of the local authority whose routes Swebus is contracted to operate.

Swebus described

The main part of the Swebus business is from local bus operations under contract to the 30 city and county passenger transport authorities (CPTAs) throughout the country. The rest is a mix of the growing Swebus Express business, and thriving coach hire in the Stockholm and Gothenburg areas. Although it is a vast country covering some 173,620sq ml, it has a relatively small population of 8.8million, mostly living in the southern part of the country.

The roots of Swebus are in the state-owned railway company, Statens Jarnvagar (SJ), and as SJ Buss the company's operations largely complemented the railway system. Then in the mid-1980s it was announced that the CPTAs would start to put out tenders to reduce their costs and encourage competition between bus operators. SJ Buss found itself in competition with another railway-owned bus company, GDG, and so the two companies merged and more competitive contracts could be negotiated.

The new Swebus, still state-owned, faced competition from two major players, Linjebuss and Näckrosbuss, from municipally-owned bus companies, and from private operators, often pooling their resources to compete aggressively for business.

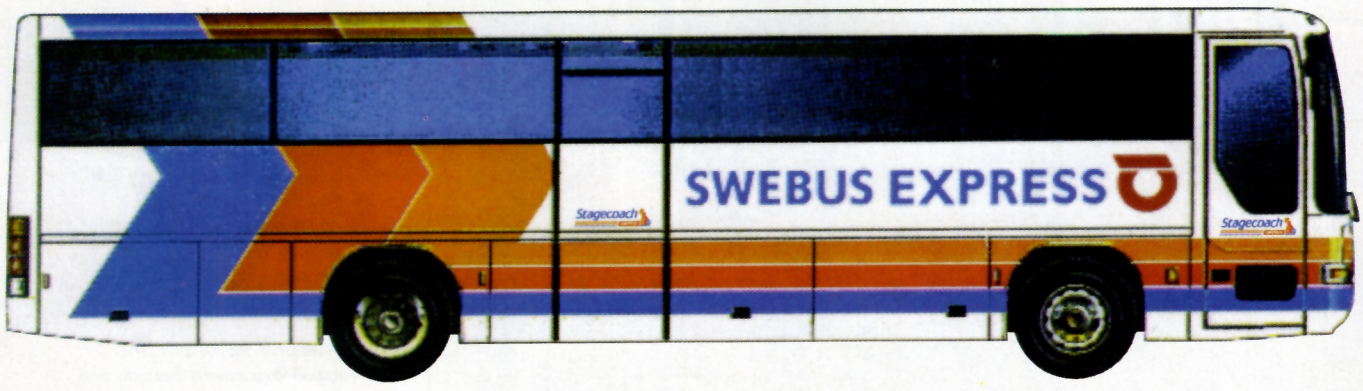
Some of the municipal companies sold out, and some tried to compete, though not everything is out to tender. If a monopoly exists, the CPTA doesn't have to put these routes out to tender.

Then, last September, Stagecoach bought Swebus, its most significant purchase in Europe so far. Lars Mattsson is the recently-appointed managing director, a career busman who started in 1974 with the GDG company. He explained how the company had grown since the tendering process started, and CPTA contracts now account for 80% of Swebus turnover. There was scope for the CPTAs to save costs, as these had risen greatly under regulation and state control as bus services were subsidised more heavily to try to counteract the move to private cars in the late 1960s/early 1970s.

Swebus's business

The CPTAs have saved money as a result of the tendering process, and operators have the incentive to contain and cut costs to operate profitably. With a 30% share of the Swedish bus market, Lars reckons Swebus is past the cost-cutting stage and is now ready to go for increased profits.

'Many of the contracts with CPTAs are on a gross basis, where the CPTA pays all costs but keeps the revenue. I favour a move to net contracts where operators receive a certain amount of money, but take the risk on revenue. Without net contracts there is limited scope to grow the market. The strength of Swebus is in the cities and towns. In country areas the



SWEBUS

structure if different, with smaller, locally-based, operators benefiting. The CPTAs can rely on Swebus because of its size and resources, and there are very few operators who can compete. It is essential to build up good relationships with the CPTAs because this is a mutual business, with the CPTA responsible for timetables, fares, planning and quality standards.'

In the future he would like to see greater Swebus involvement in operating and planning, and greater responsibility for revenue. 'If we achieve this, we will be in a stronger position on tendering.' Looking to the future, Lars would also like to see Swebus more heavily involved in infrastructure solutions and even profit-sharing. In the long run, he says, this will generate more traffic.

Lars Mattsson is enthusiastic about the growth and success of Swebus Express, described later. He recognises that the train isn't the competitor; Swebus, he says, wants a bigger share of the long-distance traffic from the car and from created travel. He emphasised that this was not a fight between rail and bus. 'There is a lot of money invested in the railway, and if that investment is threatened, the politicians could create legislation to stop the deregulation of bus services.'

The third main strand of the business is coach hire, centred on Gothenburg and Stockholm, where Swebus is working hard to be the dominant player.

Swebus in Stockholm

One-fifth of Sweden's population lives in Stockholm County, and operations for Storstockholms Lokaltrafik (SL) represent important business for Swebus. The 350 Swebus vehicles operating for SL carry the undertaking's dark red livery, with a discreet Swebus name and logo to indicate ownership. The same is true of the company's operations throughout Sweden. Swebus was successful in the 1993 round of tenders for SL business, but tenders can last from just three years with extensions to take them to seven years.

A visit to the Ekerö depot to the west of Stockholm gave me a flavour of a self-contained Swebus depot totally committed to SL work. The 46 buses and 100 staff work from a building rented from SL, and if Swebus loses the Ekerö contract next time round, the buses would be sold to the next contractor, who would have to retain the staff for a year. The buses, a fairly even mix of rigids and artics, are to SL specification, so it is not practical to move them elsewhere.

The routes from Ekerö do not run into the centre of Stockholm, where there is only a small network of city routes plus the Tunnelbana underground railway. Suburban bus routes radiate out from Tunnelbana stations. Ekerö is a good example of a Swebus suburban depot, with a strong family atmosphere among the staff and a refreshingly open management style. Hans Lindberg, the local manager, regards his depot as a large family, and if staff have personal, social or sickness problems, the others will rally round to help. He meets all staff on an individual basis once a year, and there is a monthly meeting with all staff, when he reports on progress and they can ask questions.

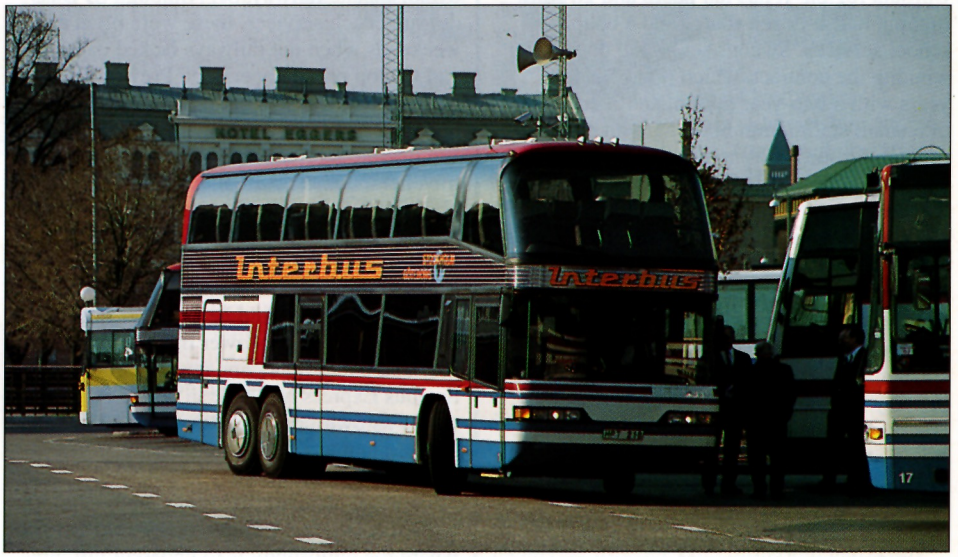
Swebus runs five depots in the SL area, and Hans Lindberg proudly pointed to performance figures showing that Ekerö was holding up well against the others. As part of his annual plan, Hans sets performance targets for his depot, and if certain targets are met, the staff will have a party to celebrate.

There is an active social club at the depot, a conference room that staff can use, and — yes — a sauna. Staff can work on and wash their own cars in part of one depot, with management approval.

When new buses are needed, Swebus will talk to SL. Buses last up to 12 years in SL operations, and Ekerö expects to replace around three buses each year.

Swebus recently produced a video and booklet for all its drivers, explaining the need to save fuel and protect the environment for future generations, and this was shot at Ekerö. The threat to contracted operations is a change of contractor. Ekerö depot is clearly happy under Swebus control, but the staff point to another Stockholm depot, Lidingö, where Swebus hands control to another operator in August.

The Swebus coach hire division operates in different liveries. Interbus is the main name used in the Gothenburg area, using high-specification coaches like this 1995 Neoplan Skyliner N122/3 70-seater.



ALL PHOTOS: GAVIN BOOTH

Opposite above:
Conditions at Gothenburg are far from ideal for Swebus Express passengers, seen here after leaving No 3979, a 1996 Volvo B10M/Van Hool Alizée, newly arrived from Stockholm. The yard used, next to the railway, offers no covered accommodation for passengers.

Opposite:
The shape of things to come? Mocked up for the Swebus staff magazine, a standard Stagecoach Volvo B10M/Plaxton Interurban in left-hand drive format with Swebus Express names. It will be interesting to see if Swebus' new masters source some of the company's bodywork requirements from the UK.

Right:
The Swebus Express coaches are being painted into Stagecoach colours, like this 1994 Volvo B10M-70B with Carrus Regal body, No 3496, loading at Gothenburg for the 6hr 50min journey to Stockholm. The building in the background is the new covered bus station which the express services are unable to use.

Stagecoach is keen to extend its Stockholm operations through the tendering process, although it is competing with the extensive Linjebuss operation and SL Buss, which is essentially SL's own in-house company. Another possibility is an extension into rail services. Stagecoach has bid for SL's Roslagsbanan, a busy electrified suburban network running north from Stockholm Östra station using trains of railbuses. There are three distinct lines, with potential for future expansion as Greater Stockholm spreads outwards.

Out of town

To get a feel for Swebus operations outside the main cities, I visited the region centred on the historic town of Uppsala, north of Stockholm. Swebus has 13 depots in Uppland region, with 400 staff and 140 buses, run by a small administrative team and leading drivers at the depots — very much the Stagecoach philosophy. Already Swebus runs contracts on behalf of Uppsala Lokaltrafik, and is hopeful of more gains. Recently the Enköpingbuss company was bought, adding 60 buses and 110 staff, and the local manager, Claes-Eric Östlund, was confident that Swebus would have 300 buses in the region by the end of the year.

Knutby is a typical small depot in the Uppsala region. It has ten buses and 20 staff, running half-a-dozen routes and a couple of school services. Swebus set up the depot after winning the contract, which it has for five years with a two-year option, and it consists of a small staff/admin building with open-air parking for the buses, a mix of Scanias and Volvos. In spite of the severity of the Swedish winters, buses are routinely parked outdoors, but are plugged into electrical water-heating systems.

Staff turnover at Knutby is low, and these include self-employed drivers who supply their own buses at an agreed rate per km. For smaller rural depots like this, many see this as the way forward.

In the large hinterland around Gothenburg, Sweden's second city, Swebus is a major player, operating a large fleet of long Volvos on behalf of the region. The 14.5m long three-axle buses have been a feature of the Swedish transport system for many years now, and the excellence of the road system and the comparative lack of congestion, allows these buses to demonstrate their crowd-moving capabilities.

Longer coaches are now becoming more common on mainland Europe, and often the height of these disguises the length. But on what in UK terms would be described as a dual-purpose vehicle, as low-built as a mid-mounted engine permits, they are an impressive sight. Most of the main services beyond Gothenburg use either 14.5m six-wheelers or shorter, 13m, two-axle buses — almost invariably Volvo, which seems right for the company's home town; the Volvo bus plant is at nearby Borås.

Swebus Express

A new bus station, adjacent to the central railway station, is the Gothenburg terminal for these suburban and longer-distance services. Surprisingly, though, the attractive building is not the terminus for the growing network of Swebus Express services; lack of space is given as the reason. Instead the express coaches are relegated to a stand alongside the railway, which offers no cover for waiting passengers, and no facilities. I discovered this when I sampled the flagship Stockholm-Gothenburg coach service, one of an expanding system which will ultimately link Sweden's main towns and cities with quality, regular headway services.

The history of express coach services has been largely dictated by the dominance of the Swedish state railway, SJ. Although SJ Buss did run coach services, these were often at weekends when the railways lacked capacity, and to stop private operators. Previously the routes were licensed, but now operators are licensed, and if they are financially sound they can operate more freely. For business travellers, domestic air and express rail are the obvious choices; times are fast but fares are high. On the Stockholm-Gothenburg corridor, SJ's impressive X2000 tilting high-speed train can cover the 490km in under three hours, but the one-way fare could be as much as SEK650 (roundly £54), with slower trains taking up to four and a half hours and costing around £42. Swebus Express has gone in at £15.80 single, where its own fare was previously £23.75, and for the summer single fare passengers can have a free return journey as part of the launch promotion; parallels are immediately obvious with Stagecoach's Express services in Britain, where the philosophy is to undercut rail fares on the basis of a percentage of the cheapest day return fare and to give introductory offers.

The one place you will see the familiar Stagecoach stripes is on Swebus Express services, and a 14.5m long Volvo B10M/Van Hool looks particularly impressive in corporate colours. Around 20 are in Stagecoach livery and 30 more will be joining them soon.

The concept of Swebus Express was carefully planned, and launched on 21 April with full Stagecoach support. It accepts that business travellers are not its market, and is targeting young people, older people visiting friends and relatives, and single parents. In place of apparently random timings it introduces regular headway departures — in the case of Stockholm-Gothenburg two-hourly between 05.50 and 15.50, with an overnight journey at 22.50. If the business continues to grow, an hourly service could be a possibility.

This is a new concept for the Swedes, who traditionally travelled mainly at weekends if they travelled at all. The existence of a regular turn-up-and-pay-the-driver service seems to have caught the imagination, and all departures I witnessed were well filled, with standby coaches pressed into use.

The coaches, with up to 60 reclining seats plus air-conditioning and toilet accommodation, do not offer Rapide-style on-board catering, but Swebus is looking at a partnership to supply foodpacks, and is experimenting with various methods. On the journey I sampled, an expected stop at a service area was abandoned in favour of the second driver selling coffee and drinks, and sandwiches and cakes. For the full 6hr 50min journey, some form of refreshment is certainly necessary.

Express is currently less than 10% of the Swebus turnover, and Carl Elfgren, express services manager, explained the thinking behind the Swebus Express concept. The company had been working towards improved express services, but Carl acknowledged the extra boost from Stagecoach that resulted in the April launch. All the routes are in the south of Sweden, and with sensible interchange arrangements, open up much of the most populated part of the country, and across the border into Norway, to Oslo.

The turn-up-and-board principle was chosen because of its simplicity. The company looked at booking systems but found that these cost too much. Measured in kilometres, there are some 20% extra coaches to ensure that nobody was left behind, and Carl argued that good

Right:
Only the discreet Swebus logo tells you that this is a Swebus coach, a 1987 Volvo B10M/Van Hool Alizée in Wasatrafik livery. It is loading at Gothenburg on a Swebus Express duplicate.

Opposite:
The sheer length of the Swedish 14.5m three-axle buses is well illustrated in this view of Swebus No 3810, a 1995 Volvo B10M-70 with 49-seat Säffle bodywork, used on the service to Gothenburg airport. It is seen against the dramatic background of Gothenburg's new opera house. The service is run under contract to the Gothenburg regional authority.

SWEBUS

traffic staff can anticipate demand.

Swebus was targeting a 60% increase in traffic in 12 months, but in just a few weeks traffic had doubled — though he admits that the starting-point was so low that increases were likely.

An important feature of the success has been the marketing effort, with vouchers allowing free return travel distributed to 1m households, and men with sandwich boards on the city streets at weekends handing out vouchers. The witty print and poster campaign is designed to look 'instant', even cheap, though in reality it probably isn't. The timetables are simple, printed in black. Posters at bus stations look like graffiti, with messages like 'The person with the most money left when they get there is the winner!', or 'Travel cheap, eat something good for your money and enjoy life', or 'We want you to afford to be there more often and longer'. What looked like a cheap photocopy highlighted in pink turned out to be a properly printed leaflet designed to look like a cheap photocopy highlighted in pink.

There is competition for the coach traffic, often from companies like Svenska Buss, which is a gathering of smaller operators running under a common name. Svenska Buss has cut its fares, and is trying to persuade passengers to 'choose the *Swedish* alternative'.

The trip on the Stockholm-Gothenburg route 831 revealed that the success of the express system was not just Swebus hype. The 07.50hrs coach, a 1996 Volvo B10M with 14.5m long Van Hool Alizée body, filled up quickly at Stockholm's impressive Cityterminalen bus station, and the second standby coach was quickly pressed into service. Staff were on hand to load baggage, according to destination, and the driver issued tickets — fairly slowly, it must be said. Surely there is scope for a faster method of ticket issue, given that the fare structure has been simplified, with only young people and senior citizens qualifying for 30% discounts. The express service also carries parcel traffic, and at each stop there were staff ready to collect and load parcels.

Facilities were not always ideal at the intermediate stops, with express coaches often squeezed into a far corner of the bus station, and what should have been brief stops often became prolonged as alighting and boarding passengers fought for space and luggage. Jönköping is the main stop on the route, and here passengers changed for Malmö and Karlstad.

There does seem to be scope for offering faster services with fewer stops at certain times, overlaid on the normal service. Our arrival at Gothenburg was just 5min late, in spite of some 20min lost with a late departure and over-long stops at intermediate points.

Swebus Express is a bold concept, and offers the company the opportunity to build up a very profitable product.

Coach hire

Duplication is provided by coaches from the company's coach hire business, centred on Stockholm and Gothenburg. Previously coach hire was offered throughout the country, but Swebus decided to concentrate on the two areas with year-round traffic. Like the local service buses, Swebus coaches can be difficult to identify, for they carry the names and liveries of acquired operators — Nymans and Wasatrafik in Stockholm, and Interbus in Gothenburg. The goodwill attached to these names is felt to be important.

Per-Erik Ericson, coach hire manager, described the type of quality business Swebus looks for — the 150 cruise ships that visit Stockholm between May and September each year, the big companies like Ericson, SKF and Volvo, ferry companies, sports teams. As with bus and express services, many small operators have banded together in associations to compete with the big boys, and this causes problems.

With some 120 coaches, Swebus fleets are the main coach hire companies in Stockholm and Gothenburg, and the up-market nature of the fleet reflects the type of business that is sought. Neoplans have been favoured for some years, and recently a new combination was introduced to the Interbus fleet — a Neoplan body mounted on Volvo B12T chassis, thought to be a combination unique to Swebus.

Although Stagecoach has tended to abandon coach hire operations in the UK, the contracted nature of a large part of the company's operations means that express and coaching are two areas where substantial profit growth can be achieved.

The sudden expansion of Swebus Express can provide problems for the coach hire business, where duplicate coaches are required at short notice, which could jeopardise capacity for the mainstream coach operation.

Vehicles

Inevitably, the 3,200-vehicle Swebus fleet is dominated by Scanias and Volvos, with a wide range of bodywork. The Volvo B10M is the single most common type, as a two-axle or three-axle bus, a three-axle coach or articulated bus. Säffle coachwork is popular, and other Scandinavian types that are well represented are Alpus and Carrus. Scanias are widely used on urban services, including the older CN112 and the newer 113 range models, including the low-floor MaxCi. Smaller buses are rare, and are normally used for school or other specialised transport. The new Scania OmniCity is also on order for some operations.

Life under Stagecoach

So how is Swebus adapting to life under Stagecoach? There is great interest among staff about Stagecoach and some of the Stagecoach myths already seem to have infiltrated Sweden, with local media keen to dish the dirt. At the top level, Lars Mattsson is enthusiastic. 'For us it is fruitful to have an owner interested in the development of transport. SJ was a good owner, but SJ was interested in running railways. Now we have an owner who wants to develop the bus industry. We can learn from UK deregulation, and particularly know-how on express services.'

Swebus recently sold its Norwegian operations, following its failure to buy another company, but it still has contracted operations in Denmark and Finland. These came as a result of acquisitions in 1995. Swebus Danmark has some 130 buses, and won tendered contracts in Aarhus and Copenhagen. Swebus Finland, with 300 buses, focuses on Greater Helsinki and Esbo. With all of the Scandinavian countries moving to more tendered work, Swebus is an ideal base to increase the Stagecoach involvement in the area.

Thanks to the many Swebus staff who took great trouble to show me the different aspects of their company., and in particular to managing director Lars Mattsson, marketing director Dag Fagring, and to Claes Hwass, Carl Elfgren, Hans Lindberg, Claes-Eric Östlund, and Per-Erik Ericson.

Buses Focus 7, *which goes on sale on 3 July, price £2.95, will concentrate on Stagecoach's operations as a whole.*

SWEBUS

New liveries, new deliveries, and new competition have added fresh interest in the Newcastle area. Photos by A D GLEN

NEW IN NEWCASTLE

Launched at the Gateshead Rally in May, a new low-floor DAF SB220 for the Go-Ahead Gateshead fleet carries the Northern Counties Paladin body, though finished at Scarborough and badged as a Plaxton.

This Mercedes-Benz/Optare StarRider, F159 FWY, in the fleet of the new Newcastle operator, HMB Buses, wears the Newcastle United colours in an all-over advertisement for Virgin Radio, making a novel pun on the team's Toon Army nickname.

Stagecoach Busways has introduced the successful low fare Magic Bus concept, pioneered in Manchester, on routes where it is in competition with the new operator, HMB Buses. This is Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68/2R No 254 (SCN 254S).

The latest Classic Bus Yearbook, some handbooks and a Bedford history

CLASSIC BUS YEARBOOK 3

ed GAVIN BOOTH. IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING. 234mm x 170mm. 128pp. **£12.99**

'Classic Bus Yearbook' is now beginning to find a strong identity of its own, distinguishing it from the much longer-running 'Buses Yearbook' with a mixture of articles which will be familiar to *Classic Bus* readers. The third in the series has a lively mix of features covering a wide range of topics, all very well illustrated in a mixture of colour and black and white. The colour includes some excellent Geoff Rixon pictures in London, as part of a pictorial feature covering Ts, STs, STLs, STDs and various other types up to the Routemaster. Before you get too excited only the postwar types feature in colour, but from pictures of brand new Routemasters on the first days in service you can understand the impact these must have made on the photographer 35 years ago and thus why his RM254 has to look the way it does.

The reviewer was particularly pleased to see an article by Tom Dalton, whose writing is always a delight, with just the right level of naughty irreverence. His recollections go back to the days of new SOSs with Northern General, but never fall into the trap of wallowing too much. Mike Russell takes a little time off from running Routemasters in Reading to examine his other love, trolleybuses, in this case a pictorial feature in which they feature in juxtaposition with bridges. Why? Well such connections are often tenuous but his photos are superb — including several in colour — and that is justification in itself. His are not the only tenuous connections; Philip Wallis, whose present day photographs often appear in *Buses*, shows that he was also a competent photographer more than 30 years ago with a feature entitled 'Tenuous Connections', showing connecting services — not least the unlikely connection of services of Wilts & Dorset with Southdown.

There are plenty of other features ensuring coverage of most regions of the country, with the usual light-hearted touch thrown in as well. There's a little bit of nostalgia for everyone from 25 to 95 here, all well-presented, and none of it stodgy.
STEPHEN MORRIS

TOY & MODEL BUS HANDBOOK 1 — EARLY DIECAST MODELS

BRITISH BUS PUBLISHING.
210mm x 148mm. 80pp **£9.95**

Slightly different from the usual Bus Handbooks, this one looks at the diecast bus models which were available before the recent explosion in high-quality models from EFE and Corgi. There is little depicted in there that comes close to the quality of today's diecast models — the enthusiast has never had it so good — but what is surprising is the number of models that were actually available in earlier years. Naturally Corgi, Dinky and Matchbox are all included, and will bring pangs of nostalgia to many of us, though there are all sorts of obscure makes covered as well.

It is produced to the usual high standard and format we have come to expect of British Bus Publishing's handbooks, with a well-illustrated and authoritative text by Roger Bailey, who certainly knows his model buses.
STEPHEN MORRIS

BUSES OF LONDON FLEETBROOK

LOTS. 147mm X 105mm. 128pp **£4.50**

The 1997 edition of this little reference book is excellent value, packed as it is with information. It lists the fleet of all operators active on London Transport services, including their buses used outside London. A masterpiece of effective packaging, it even squeezes 16 pages of photos into its 128 pages, produced on gloss paper rather than the matt paper of the rest of the book, and is very well produced. It has a full colour cover, and bravely LOTS has put a green Kentish Bus Dart SLF on the front instead of a more familiar red London bus. LOTS is always good at keeping up to date, and this latest edition of the fleetbook is as up to date as it can be. It's a very useful and pocket-sized alternative to the more lavish Handbooks, which cost rather more; no doubt many enthusiasts will keep this in their pocket and have the bigger Handbooks at home.
STEPHEN MORRIS

HONG KONG BUS HANDBOOK

BRITISH BUS PUBLISHING.
210mm x 148mm. 80pp **£9.95**

Interest in Hong Kong's buses has never been greater than it is now. In addition to Danny Chan's superb locally-produced handbooks, we now have a British one which will be rather easier to obtain and gives you fleet lists of all the major Hong Kong operators in one volume, making it a little easier on the pocket. In addition to KMB, CMB and Citybus you get Argos KCRC and New Lantau Bus Company well as the trams and the Peak Tramway fleet.

The illustration is good, but not up to the exceptional standard attained by Danny Chan. Nonetheless it is an interesting selection of photos, some in colour. We were also pleased to see that it includes a brief introduction to each of the fleets covered, a welcome addition.
STEPHEN MORRIS

THE BEDFORD STORY PART TWO — 1950-1986

STUART FERGUS BROATCH & ALAN TOWNSIN
289mm x 205mm. 160pp. **£19.95**

There was a time when every other coach you met in Britain seemed to be a Bedford. General Motors' amazing success in the 1930s with the first Bedford bus chassis continued after the War with the legendary OB, and many were surprised when it was killed off in favour of the 'Big Bedford' SB in 1950. This second part of the story covering Bedford's buses, trucks and vans, starts with the SB, which remained in production for over 30 years, and led to bigger, heavier and more sophisticated chassis culminating in the short-lived YNV Venturer in 1984. This could have been Bedford's answer to the Leylands and Volvos that coach operators were choosing for faster and more punishing long-distance work, but it came too late to persuade General Motors to stay in bus and truck production.

If later Bedfords lacked the appeal of the more exotic heavyweight chassis, this fine book reminds us that the company had its moments, like the exotic three-axle twin-steer VAL chassis of 1962, a means of providing a lightweight 36ft chassis, and the rear-engined JJL midibus of 1976, which justifiably gets a chapter on its own.

The JJL, surely the father of today's Darts and B6s, was Marshall's brainchild adopted by GM, and had it appeared 10 years later, it could well be a familiar sight on our streets today.

Stuart Broach and Alan Townsin tell the last chapter in the Bedford story well, and the print and reproduction quality is particularly good.

A third volume, covering the final years under GM and the subsequent transfer of trucks to AWD and then Marshall, is promised for next year.
GAVIN BOOTH

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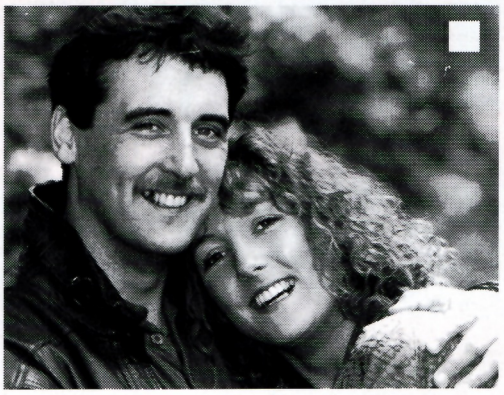

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Questionnaire

Please complete in block capitals

1. Mr ❒ Mrs ❒ Ms ❒

Surname: _____

First Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Post Code: _____

Tel No. _____

I am seriously interested in meeting someone through Dateline.

2. Personal Information

Marital Status: Single ❒ Divorced ❒

Widowed ❒ Separated ❒

Religion: _____

Age: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Do you have children of your own?

Yes ❒ No ❒

If yes, how many live with you? _____

3. Your personal details

Height: _____

Build: slight ❒ medium ❒ large ❒

Hair colour: _____

Dress/Looks: casual ❒ fashionable ❒
elegant ❒ sporty ❒

4. Your work

Present job: _____

Self-employed ❒ employed ❒
civil servant ❒ manual worker ❒
part-time ❒ not working ❒
unemployed ❒ in-training ❒

Schooling

O levels / GCSE's ❒ A levels ❒
Further Education ❒ Polytechnic ❒
University ❒ Business School ❒
Other: _____

5. Your Personality

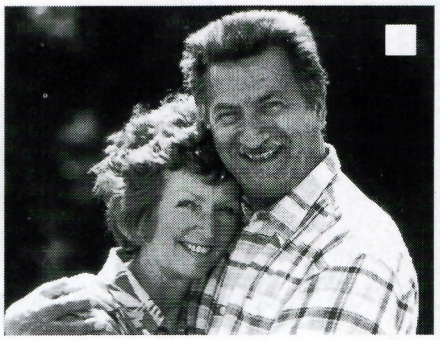
❒ Warmhearted ❒ Fashionable
❒ Serious ❒ Practical
❒ Considerate ❒ Conventional
❒ Shy ❒ Reliable
❒ Romantic ❒ Adventurous

6. How would people who know you best describe you?

❒ always ready for a joke
❒ somewhat dreamy
❒ never has problems
❒ takes life a bit too seriously
❒ not easily upset
❒ always active
❒ chatty

7. Your interests

❒ Wining/Dining ❒ Jazz/Folk music
❒ Pubs ❒ Classical music
❒ Sports/Keep fit ❒ Theatre/Arts
❒ Politics/History ❒ Watching TV
❒ Reading ❒ Smoking
❒ Travelling ❒ Astrology
❒ Science/Tech ❒ Children
❒ Cinema ❒ Homemaking
❒ Pets/Animals ❒ Gardening
❒ Pop music ❒ Countryside



8. Details of the partner you would like:

Minimum age: ____ Maximum age: ____

Height: min. ____ max. ____ Don't mind ❒

Children?

Yes, at home ❒ Yes, living elsewhere ❒

None ❒

Marital status: Single ❒ Divorced ❒

Widowed ❒ Separated ❒

Don't mind ❒

9. Which of the three pictures do you prefer? (tick the box)

Dept. Bus02

Please answer the questions above, cut out this page and send it to us at:
Dateline 23 Abingdon Road, London W8 6AL *or call us now on 01 869 324 100*

GLASGOW VARIETY

Stagecoach has returned to the Glasgow scene with innovative services, while Strathclyde Buses has been buying new and second-hand buses for its Glasgow fleets, and continues is fleet repainting programme.

Above: As reported in Scottish Column last month, Stagecoach introduced its network of Glasgow local services between Buchanan bus station and the city's south-west suburbs, using new motorway links, on 24 April, using 24 Volvo B6LEs with Alexander ALX200 bodies. No 370 (P370 DSA) is seen at Pollok Centre on the second day of the services, when no fares were being charged. STEPHEN MORRIS

Right: Strathclyde Buses is supporting the green diesel initiative, advertised here on Volvo Olympian/Alexander RL type No VO102 (P203 TGD), STEPHEN MORRIS

Above:
Another second-hand Volvo B6 for the Greater Glasgow fleet is No MV14 (L68 CNY), seen at Mansweood in April. It was new to Bebb, Llantwit Fadre.
MURDOCH CURRIE

Below:
Greater Glasgow No MV15 (N103 CKU) is an ex-Mainline Volvo B6 with Alexander Dash bodywork, seen in Union Street, Glasgow, in April.
MURDOCH CURRIE

YOU WRITE

to BUSES
Coombelands House
Addlestone
Weybridge
Surrey KT15 1HY
Fax: 01932 854750

The MMC lottery and problems of rural buses

FirstBus and the MMC

From: Ralph F. Barker, South Queensferry

Your editorial in the May issue refers to what appears to be the unfairness of the Cowie takeover of British Bus not being referred to the MMC when FirstBus has been forced to sell off Midland Bluebird including part of SMT. One factor however which you do not mention and surely which must be taken into account is how the company in a monopolistic situation has conducted itself.

As far as the GRT/First Bus takeover of SMT is concerned (where the major competitor was Lothian Region Transport), the Edinburgh area services of SMT have seen the following:

Major rationalisation between the two companies to the extent that LRT withdrew from all of West Lothian and even from parts of Edinburgh, with SMT withdrawing from many city services.

SMT takeover of local operators using full size vehicles in the area — eg Lothian Transit and Edinburgh Transport (not many existed to begin with, but now there are none except LRT).

Large fare increases to the extent that an equivalent journey from my home town to Edinburgh is now around 30% dearer on SMT compared to Stagecoach Fife Express services.

Major lack of investment in vehicles — the 13 Dennis Dart SLFs recently entering service in Edinburgh are the first new medium/large size buses intended for service to be introduced in Edinburgh by SMT since two Olympians were delivered in 1985.

Disinvestment — 16 year old Fleetlines being sent south but replaced by Atlanteans between 18 and 20 years old.

I'm afraid the decision of the MMC to force FirstBus to sell Midland and part of SMT was the correct one, and as someone who would like to see public transport thrive in Edinburgh, can only hope that the MMC will resist any attempt by First Bus to hold on to the SMT part, selling only Midland.

The MMC lottery

From: Claydon William, Norwich

I concur with your May editorial that regulatory body deliberations owe more to the National Lottery than balanced authority. The inconsistencies become even more apparent if you also consider the rail franchises, 17 out of 25 of which are now partly or wholly managed by six big bus groups.

It may be recalled that during the Scotrail bidding negotiations it was announced that Stagecoach was likely to be referred to the MMC if it became the preferred bidder on the grounds that it would hold an unreasonably dominant position within Scotland, despite the fact there were few Stagecoach services which competed directly with Scotrail.

How curious then that Scotrail was awarded to National Express, which bought Caledonian Express, Citylink and has bus operations over a large, albeit thinly-populated, area of Scotland. It was also permitted to retain its East Midlands-London coach services after gaining Midland Mainline and has Central Trains, despite being the owner of Travel West Midlands, again without challenge. How strange that National Express was gaining Midland Mainline, Central Trains and North London Railways around the same time that FirstBus was told to divest certain bus operations in Scotland where it held too much adjacent territory. Work that one out! I wouldn't mind betting that there were a few puzzled phone calls between Weston-super-Mare and Edgbaston along the lines of 'how on earth did you get away with that one?'!

Meanwhile in Essex FirstBus was awarded the Great Eastern rail franchise; just about all of its network is mirrored by Eastern National, Thamesway and Eastern Counties, while on Merseyside MTL has Merseyrail Electrics.

One of John Prescott's early tasks must be to clarify the transport definition of words like 'market', 'territory' and 'competition' and unify the direction and consistency of regulatory authority decision making.

As reported in 'News', National Express has, following the change of Government, now been referred over the questions of Scotrail and Citylink and Travel West Midlands and Central Trains.

Stops not the issue

From: John L. Hobbs,Tavistock, Devon

The Editorial in the April issue devoted to the arguably trivial matter of bus stop design might give the impression that there is nothing more pressing within the industry about which to express concern.

May I suggest that reliability of service in rural areas might be a matter worth investigating, but to learn more there will be a need literally to get away from London and the centres of urban life and travel by bus in the countryside, where the failure of one bus to turn up at the not so modern but stop might mean a wait of several hours, if not days.

The unreliability of the country bus seems to stem from several factors, not the least of which are the inadequacy of staff numbers, and mechanical failures of some of the older buses which tend to get relegated to rural routes. The whole problem is then compounded by the inability of the operator to communicate with those waiting at the stops for the bus that will arrive late — how late? — or not at all.

To stand in a queue and listen to the grumbles of the would-be customers, some perhaps with a return ticket that will not be used, when the bus fails to arrive, would be an interesting experience for the operator. I can understand that what the City thinks is of far more importance to him than what I think as I wait for my bus that does not come, but a fall in customers because of unreliability, will impact even there in the longer term. To hike the fares to keep the City (and me) happy is not a lasting antidote to declining passengers.

Can nothing be done to improve the reliability of the rural bus? I hope we might have some positive ideas come forward, but no excuses please, only explanations. In providing the latter, it might just be possible that thought will be given to more positive and imaginative day to day management and marketing. Then the new-found customers might just discover that the bus is an acceptable alternative to the car and stay with the bus.

We like to cover as many issues as possible, and while stops may be considered by some to be a triviality, our mention of them in an editorial by no means suggests we have lost sight of wider issues.

And as for getting out of London, Mr Hobbs, we are based in an area served by an hourly bus at best, and though London & Country's reliability has improved immeasurably of late, we know only too well what it is like to wait at a bus stop when the bus doesn't turn up on an infrequent service. In terms of bus service provision the Coombelands area of Addlestone is rather more rural in nature than some parts of Devon! — Ed

LEYTON OPEN DAY

Stagecoach East London staged a very successful open day at its Leyton garage on 10 May to celebrate 50 years of the postwar RT

It was on 10 May 1947 that RT402 left Leyton garage with running number T16 on route 10 to become the first postwar RT in service. It was perhaps fortuitous that 10 May 1997 fell on a Saturday, as it enabled Leyton garage, now one of three garages of Stagecoach East London, to stage a very successful open day.

Roger Bowker, managing director of Stagecoach East London, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Waltham Forest were there at 11.00 to dispatch beautifully restored RT191, a roofbox RT with suitably masked destination boxes and restricted blinds and early postwar livery, for Abridge with running number T16.

That was only one event of a busy day, which saw special events both at the garage and at the LT Museum in Covent Garden, with the two linked by a special bus service, X38, on which ran six postwar RTs, six Routemasters and a Bedford OB. Most of the Routemasters were something special; three were Green Lines, two of them RMCs, the other Blue Triangle's RCL2239. But undoubtedly the stars of the show, even if they were perhaps gatecrashing on what was meant to be the RTs' day, were the LT Museum's RM1 and FRM1, the latter proving the most popular bus of the day. It's not often you get chance to ride on FRM1.

But that wasn't all; Blue Triangle's RT2150 put in turns on three of Leyton's routes, the 30, Hackney Wick-Marble Arch (though for early birds only — you would have had to have been in Hackney for 07.07 to catch that one!), 48 between Leyton and London Bridge, and return to Walthamstow, and 69, Walthamstow-North Woolwich, while Timebus's low-bridge AEC Regent III RLH23 made some very nostalgic sights on the 230 between Walthamstow and Leyton Green.

Meanwhile the London Transport Museum had a display of five RTs, while at Leyton garage there were 23 preserved buses on display, 10 of them RTs, including prewar RT113, plus two RTWs while other buses included Cobham's STL441 which made a fine sight alongside the LT Museum's rarely-seen green ST821. One of the RTs, RT172, which is in the livery of Bradford Corporation, with whom it entered service after its short life with LT, was enjoying a weekend of fame; the previous day it had featured on the 3,000th edition of the ever-popular children's BBC programme, *Blue Peter*. Was it really covered in blue and cream sticky-back plastic, we wonder?

This was the first time that East London had staged an open day since privatisation, and over 3,000 people attended, with a mixture of bus enthusiasts and local people, and large amounts of money were raised for the Macmillan fund for cancer relief at the local Whipps Cross Hospital and for the Mayor's charity, Barnardos Hamara Family Project for families with severely disabled children in the Borough of Waltham Forest.

Above:
Ready for the off; Roger Bowker (far left), East London's md, and the Mayor and Mayoress of Waltham Forest about to dispatch RT191 on a re-run of the first postwar RT journey 50 years earlier. Behind Roger Bowker is RT172 in Bradford livery.
JON BATCHELOR

Looking totally at home back in the streets of East London is RLH23 at Wood Street station on route 230.
DOMINIC WEST

PRESERVATION

CELEBRATION OF STOCKPORT

STEPHEN MORRIS reports on another of the Greater Manchester Transport Society's successful 'themed' weekends

Yet again the weekend of 10-11 May saw another of Greater Manchester Transport Society's very successful 'themed' events, this time focussing on Stockport. Stockport Corporation ran its own public transport services from 1901 to 1969, before being absorbed into SELNEC PTE. It was always a popular undertaking with enthusiasts, due partly to its attractive white and red livery, with black lining carried right to the end of operations, and with an interesting fleet and a very old-fashioned vehicle policy.

Indeed while its buses in the early-1960s had an appearance more modern than those of its neighbour, Manchester, by dint of the latter specifying PD2s with exposed radiators whereas Stockport's recent deliveries had concealed radiators, some with St Helen's-style glass-fibre fronts, by 1968 things had swung the other way. While Manchester was receiving the first of its trend-setting Mancunian one-man-operated, dual-door double-deckers, Stockport was buying PD3s with exposed radiators, half cabs, open rear platforms, manual gearboxes and wind-down windows. Indeed the writer remembers seeing the first of the PD2s to revert to exposed radiators in 1964 and assuming it was an old bus of a type he had not seen before, until it grew close enough for the gleaming paintwork and B-registration to give the game away.

All these later buses had smart East Lancs bodywork, their concessions to modernity being confined to a translucent roof panel, fluorescent lighting and a rather avant garde pale green ceiling. Earlier PD2s in Stockport had been bodied by Leyland — remarkably long-lived vehicles, some of which survived long enough to be transferred elsewhere under SELNEC PTE, while in the later 1950s had come PD2s bodied by Crossley and Longwell Green. Single-deckers were not much more modern either, with Crossley-bodied Leyland Tiger Cubs being followed ten years later by dual-door East Lancs-bodied Leyland Leopards, which looked modern enough though still featured manual gearboxes.

Stockport's great bid for modernity came soon before SELNEC PTE was formed; firstly the last eight PD3s were forward entrance with a cab designed for one-man operation, then 10 Bristol VRTs were ordered, but were destroyed in a fire at East Lancs coachworks. These would have been the first Bristols for the undertaking and the first VRTs in the area.

Return of the PD3s

One of the reasons why the Greater Manchester Transport Society stages these events is to give it a focus for its own vehicle restoration projects. Such has been the success of this policy, and indeed of its restoration policy as a whole, that its museum has a collection of 84 vehicles, no fewer than 70 of which are restored.

Two vehicles which emerged from restoration just in time for the event were the

Opposite:
One aspect of the Manchester Museum's 'themed' weekends is the popular evening drives. Stockport all-Leyland PD2 308 and Crossley 321 recreate Stockport's traditional endless summers (well, we can dream!) while PD3 91 waits on the other side of the road in this idyllic evening scene at Woodford.
JOHN ROBINSON

Above:
Looking like brand new Stockport East Lancs-bodied Leyland Titan PD3/14 No 91 (MJA 891G), the last open rear platform double-decker to enter service in Britain, having newly emerged from East Lancs, stands outside the Manchester Museum with Crossley 321 (EDB 575).
JOHN ROBINSON

Above left:
Also newly restored is former Stockport PD3/14 71 (KJA 571F), which has been restored as Greater Manchester Transport 5871, creating a good contrast with 91 and representing the era of the PTEs as bus operators.
STEPHEN MORRIS

Left:
A fine portrait of all-Leyland PD2/1 308 (EDB 562) at Ardwick Green recreating the trunk Hazel Grove-Stockport-Manchester service in the 1950s.
JOHN ROBINSON

first and the last of Stockport's PD3s, respectively no 71 (KJA 871F) and 91 (MJA 891G). Though the purist would point out that they are quite different buses, in that the G-registration ones had sliding windows rather than wind-down ones, one could question why a museum needs two such similar buses. In fact, the museum has made an excellent point of contrast between the two, in that 91, quite properly, has been superbly turned out as new, in white and red Stockport livery as befits such a historic bus — it was the last new rear-entrance, open-platform double-decker to enter service in Britain, which it did in January 1969 — the other has been turned out in 1975 condition as Greater Manchester Transport No 5871. As far as we, and anyone at the Manchester Museum, know it is the only halfcab bus to have been restored in a PTE livery, and most striking it looks.

There was little dissent at the Stockport event, when both appeared for the first time, that 91 was much the prettier-looking bus, and it certainly evoked clear memories of not too many years ago when it was brand new — even though to look at the bus it could have been new a lifetime ago. But 5871 stole at least an equal share of the limelight and fills a very significant gap in the country's transport history. Not many enthusiasts positively welcomed the sweeping away of attractive and old-fashioned local images by brash, new corporate styles for a new world, and it is too easy to overlook that period of history. In the same way buses of the 1970s are not being assiduously collected for preservation in the way that earlier buses were, and, moving on a bit, the first generation of minibuses is nigh-on extinct already. Nonetheless the Manchester Museum has already grasped that nettle and has a Bee Line Sherpa as part of its collection.

East Lancs Coachbuilders repainted No 91, using paint supplied by a firm located close to the museum, H. Marcel Guest Ltd, which now has a substantial proportion of the PSV paint market, and made up the colours specially from small samples supplied by the Museum. Philip Hilton, East Lancs' sales director, is amongst a number of employees at East Lancs who had worked on the Stockport PD3s when they were built, and officially handed No 91 over to the Museum on the day before the event.

The writer was privileged to drive both buses on the handover day, and also drove 5871 in service on the Sunday afternoon. What was particularly impressive was the standard of East Lancs' build quality; though built at a time when the perception was that quality was declining, both buses were incredibly 'tight', with no movement or rattles in the bodywork. Compared with some halfcab double-deckers neither enjoyed an especially long service life, clocking up about 13 years apiece, but both would have been worked hard during that time and probably not cosseted too much.

What was surprising was that with late Titans receiving Atlantean axles, they also have Atlantean air brakes, and stop remarkably well. So much so, in fact, that Stockport specified a brake pedal mounted lower down than usual to accentuate the difference between these and older, vacuum-braked, Titans in the fleet. Of the two 5871 was actually the better to drive, with a quieter engine, slightly better performance and more predictable gearchange, but both delighted passengers with plenty of late-Titan sound effects, complete with rasping, almost Leopard-like, exhaust.

The event itself

The two PD3s were very much the stars of the show, and on the Sunday appeared in service. 91 in particular looked splendid, passing through Manchester Piccadilly on service 92, looking just as it had done in the same location 28 years earlier. Stockport is a bit of a long way from the Manchester Museum, so the event was actually centred on the museum with buses running just a taster of two Stockport routes, terminating at Ardwick Green, which is at the Manchester end of Stockport Road. However four Stockport-area buses were displayed in the centre of Stockport and former employees of Stockport Corporation were invited along. The buses were 308, an all-Leyland PD2, North Western 224, a similar but lowbridge vehicle, visiting East Lancs-bodied Stockport PD2 No 65 and a new Alexander ALX-bodied Volvo B6LE from Stockport Corporation's ultimate successor, Stagecoach Manchester.

It was a little disappointing that one or two vehicles expected did not turn up, such as a Crossley-bodied Tiger Cub while a Leopard recently acquired by one of the Museum's members, had needed more work than expected and was not ready. Nonetheless there were plenty of interesting vehicles, not least the museum's Stockport Crossley, 321, which is almost exactly contemporaneous with the all-Leyland PD2, No 308, and gave some melodic rides on the service.

Two open-toppers were one of the forward-entrance PD3s, 97, which was the last new bus delivered to Stockport, converted in 1981, and 295, a 1951 all-Leyland PD2/1 which became a tree-lopper in 1968. Meanwhile two of the 1935 English Electric centre-entrance Leyland Tiger TS7s were present, the museum's own 185 (JA 7585), which was rescued from a garden in Suffolk in 1995 and is to be the subject of an appeal to get it roadworthy again, and David Hoare's 191 (JA 7591), which is very much a runner.

As events go it was probably a small and rather select one, though it attracted large numbers of visitors, of whom well over 1,000 travelled on the service. For those who recall Stockport Corporation it was an evocative event, and something of a rare one with two fine buses emerging from restoration, almost identical yet showing an important changes in the structure of the British bus industry in a short time.

In need of restoration; the Manchester Museum's Stockport centre-entrance English Electric-bodied Leyland Tiger TS7 185 (JA 7585) of 1935 is to be the subject of an appeal for funds to restore it.
STEPHEN MORRIS

On the Move

JOHN G. LIDSTONE with news of buses in preservation

The pair of **Blackpool** Leyland Titan PD3s acquired for driver training, 512/5 (HFR 512/5E), have been noted still extant in a yard in Rotherham. The last Blackpool PD3 of all, 540 (LFR 540G) is now undergoing restoration after a late rescue by a preservationist.

The United Enthusiasts Club reports an amazing survivor in the shape of former **Orange Bros** petrol-engined AEC Regal TY 9608 and a less well-known **United** Bristol L5G is EHN 539, which carries the body from DHN 475.

Buckinghamshire services start

Buckinghamshire County Council is again running its heritage services on Sundays. Classic Coaches of High Wycombe will be running four routes, 78 (Aylesbury-Milton Keynes-Woburn Abbey, via Bucks Railway Centre), 79 (High Wycombe-Princes Risborough-Aylesbury via Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway), 87 (Amersham-Chesham-Aylesbury) and 88 (Aylesbury-Tring-Whipsnade-Aylesbury). Vehicles will include Albion Valkyrie GWT 630, AEC Reliances GUP 647H, JHL 983, WWN 191, ANW 710C and HLP 10C, Bristol MW coach EDV 505D, Bristol REs SWC 24K, MHW 285L, LDV 847F and 'one or two surprises'. Classic Coaches is also running a commercial Sunday service 80, Beaconsfield-High Wycombe-Marlow via Bekonscot Model Village and the new Blue Max aviation museum, until October. Vehicles will include the Albion Valkyrie, ex-Hebble AEC Regent V LJX 198, RM2198, Leyland PD3 HNW 366D and Bristol VR NDL 637M.

Further details from Classic Coaches on 01494 521994.

Transperience Rally is on

Although we were not advised of it in time for the Rally Calendar in *Buses* April, the West Yorkshire Transport Museum Society will be staging its annual rally at Transperience Discovery Park, Low Moor, Bradford, on Sunday **6 July**. A free bus service will run from Bradford Interchange.

Although it is currently in administrative receivership, Transperience will open as usual throughout this season; further information on 01274 690909. Details for the rally itself are available on 0113 256 6505.

Keighley Bus Museum also has an open day on the same date, and will also be running a free bus service from Bradford, as well as from Keighley and Halifax.

Fishwick celebrates

John Fishwick & Sons is celebrating its 90th anniversary with a rally at its Golden Hill Garage in Leyland on **28 September**. It is hoped that the Singleton's Leyland Tiger TS7T will be there along with the Bamber Bridge AEC Regent No 4 (UTC 672) and Fishwick Leyland PD2/40 No 5 (528 CTF). A day ticket will be available on Fishwick's buses and there will be an enhanced service from Preston and Chorley, with double-deckers which do not usually appear on all-day service. There will also be services run by vintage buses linking Fishwick's two garages and the British Commercial Vehicle Museum.

Further details from Bill Ashcroft, event organiser, c/o J. Fishwick & Sons, Golden Hill Garage, Leyland PR5 2LE, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope.

As reported last month this AEC Reliance of Henleys of Abertillery has been rescued for preservation following an arson attack which brought its long career in service to an end. It appeared at the Valley Lines Festival of Transport at Barry Island on 1 June, in use as rally control.
STEPHEN MORRIS

Good support for Irish rally

This year's Irish Transport Trust rally was well supported by vehicles from the mainland and the Republic of Ireland, as well as local vehicles. The event was held on Saturday 26 April, with a new starting point at Loughshore car park, Antrim, rather than the usual Carrickfergus, though finished in Bangor after a road run which took in the new Lagan Bridge in Belfast.

Vehicles from Great Britain were the Mersey & Calder Group's Liverpool Atlantean, L501 (501 KD), the 2489 Group's well-travelled Birmingham Crossley, 2489 (JOJ 489), the North Eastern RE Group's Burnley, Colne & Nelson Bristol RESL/Pennine PCW 203J and C. Douglas's fine Plaxton-bodied Bedford PJK USS 416L, preserved in the livery of Glass, Haddington, which also appeared last year.

From the Republic came the ever popular Leyland Leopard L2, E14, and a Bus Eireann General Motors-powered Leyland Leopard PSU5 M-class, now relegated to schools work, along with several newer buses. A newcomer from within Northern Ireland was ex-North Western Alexander-bodied AEC Reliance 851 (RDB 851) preserved by Jim Poots in the colours of Sureline of Lurgan, which operated a number of the same batch in the 1970s.

The Birmingham Crossley was rewarded for its trouble with the Reg Ludgate trophy for the best overall entry in the opinion of a guest judge, the Redpath trophy for the furthest-travelled entry and the Bangor Tourist Cup for the best preserved double-decker.

Birmingham Crossley 2489 celebrates its Irish Transport Trust victories outside Belfast City Hall.
PETER YEOMANS

The ex-North Western AEC Reliance, RDB 846, now preserved as a Sureline of Lurgan vehicle.
PETER YEOMANS

Ambermile Group

The Barnsley-based Jowitt/Headlight operation is now using Leyland National 11351A/1R/B49F UHG 753R.

Andrews-Sheffield Omnibus, Sheffield YT

Renault 1500 is correctly E412 EPE.

Andybus, Sherston

Ex-Thamesdown Dennis Lancet/Wadham Stringer GTP 95X is now at work in full livery, noted in use on service 92 at Chippenham recently.

APT, Rayleigh

Ex-Cambus Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F PTT 92R and BCL 213T are now in stock.

Aston Express, Thurcroft

Acquisitions are Leyland National 2 NL106L11/1R/B41F LUA 424V ex-Delta of Mansfield, similar but B44F YSX 928W ex-Fife Scottish, Mercedes-Benz 811D/Optare B25F G84 KUB ex-Metroline and 608D/Dormobile B20F D526/38/43 RCK from unreported source.

Barnsley & District YT

Leyland National 2 NL116AL11/1R/B52F 213 (SWX 539W) is now acquired, ex-Harrogate & District.

Barry's, Moreton

Mercedes-Benz 814D/Autobus Classique II C29F K730 GBE is in stock ex-Baildon of Guiseley.

Body type

A	Articulated
B	Single-deck bus
C	Coach
DP	Dual purpose, usually coach seats/bus shell
H	Double-decker
L	Lowbridge double-decker (ie with side sunken gangway upstairs. All other types, with conventional gangways are H [Highbridge] regardless of overall height)
O	Open-top
CO	Convertible open-top

Seating capacity

(For double-deckers this is shown with the upper-deck capacity first, eg 43/30, indicating 43 'over' 30. Where these are not known a total figure is given).

Door position

F	Front
R	Rear
C	Centre
D	Dual doors

When platform doors are fitted where these would not normally figure, usually on rear entrance buses, this is indicated by D after the door position. The letter 't' after the door indicates the provision of a toilet whilst L after the door position shows that a wheelchair lift is fitted.

Re-registrations

Where a vehicle is re-registered its previous registration numbers follow in italic type, with the most recent given first where it has been registered more than once.

Vehicle reports should be sent to J. G. Lidstone, 76 Thames Drive, Leigh-on-Sea, Essex SS9 2XD.

Please mark your envelope 'Fleet News'.

Bebb, Llantwit Fardre

New Mercedes-Benz 811D/Autobus DP33F P73-76 VWO have replaced full-sized vehicles on the Beddau-Cardiff express service! The Plaxton-bodied Volvo coaches previously used are now redeployed on contracts and private charter, although they do reappear at peaks.

Birmingham Coach Company, Smethwick

Elderly Leyland National 1151/1R NPD 132L is now in stock, along with newer 11351A/1R YEV 307S in allover white. 11351/1R VKU 72S is now in fleet livery as is 10351A/1R UPB 320S along with 10351B/1Rs DNW 844T and YPL 406T.

Ex-Go-Ahead North East Dodge/Alexander E630/4/40 BVK are also now in stock.

Blackburn Transport

Dennis Dart SLF/East Lancs demonstrator P718 WFR has been on demonstration here and now 8 such vehicles are on order.

Leyland Atlanteans 129/34 (LFR 129T, WRN 134V) have passed to Anslow of Pontypool.

Blackpool Transport

Further Leyland Atlanteans transferred to Squires Gate depot are 340/1/3 (AHG 340V, GHG 341/3W), following the entry into service of the last pair of ex-Trent Leyland Olympians and joining sisters 322-31/4/6-9 transferred earlier. The last ex-Trent Leyland Olympian to go into service is 405 (XAU 705Y) after preparation as an allover advertisement. 401-6 (XAU 701-6Y) are to H45/32F layout and 407-10 (A707-10 DAU) are H45/30F. Optare Metrorider 595 (N595 LFV) is also transferred to Squires Gate in addition to 584-7, to operate the 'Kirkham Roamer' minibus service on contract.

Former Fylde Atlantean 445 (NJI 5505) is now in green and cream livery, as is Optare Delta 132 (H2 FBT).

Repainting of AEC Routemasters and despatch south to Reading Mainline continued through March and April, with 426 (735 DYE) departing at the end of March, 421-3 (583 CLT, WLT 848, 627 DYE) in early April and with 425/31/3 (650 DYE, ALM 71, 89B) in the paintshop at this time, this leaves 427/9 (WLT 879, ALD 966B) as the last in Blackpool colours.

Meanwhile, veteran 32-year old Atlantean open-topper 451 (DBA 227C) has passed to a new owner in Scotland. Withdrawn 458/9/88 remain in stock.

Two former Blackpool AEC Swifts have been back at Rigby works undergoing repairs, these being 554 (PFR 554H) and 570 (OFR 970M). Meanwhile, twin 562 (UFR 562K) has been destroyed by fire in a training exercise in the ownership of the Blackpool Airport Fire Authority, its gutted remains still being extant at the Airport. The *Fylde Tramway News* reports that the two full-front Leyland Titans 309/51 (LFV 309, 351 YFR) are now in the care of the British Bus Preservation Group.

Black Prince, Morley

The acquisition of yet another seven ex-Newport Transport Scania BR112DH/Marshall H45/31F in the shape of PTG 93, 95-100Y now brings the complete batch of 20 Newport Scanias 82-101 (JBO 82-92W, PTG 93-101Y) neatly into stock here! JBO 90W is latest repainted, in blue and cream.

Further reports suggest the use of Scania-MCW Metropolitan JAG 403N, Volvo Ailsa WRJ 447X and Leyland Olympian ACM 772X only as a source of spare parts. Leyland Titan A904 SYE is confirmed as having only been on loan from Cherry of Aintree.

Ailsa SSN 254S passed for spares to Weardale of Stanhope, then on to Whiting, Ferrybridge (dealer) for scrap; NSP 318R has passed to Ripley of Carlton (dealer), Leyland Nationals JTU 580T, EMB 642S and ODM 679V to Wigley, Carlton (dealer). GMB 662T has also been withdrawn, whilst good news is that Volvo Ailsa JOV 749P has gone to the 4738 Group, Birmingham.

Bluebird, Moston

Ex-Stagecoach Manchester Leyland Atlanteans SND 468/88X are now in stock.

Blue Triangle, Rainham

Sightseeing operations have passed to London Coaches along with several open-top ex-London DMSs. Further, other vehicles with sightseeing lettering have had this removed, such as MCW Metrobus DAE 514W and the Leyland Titan trio.

Interestingly, some of London Coaches' once-proud fleet of AEC Routemasters have now moved the opposite way here, for disposal and are RM428, 704, 1783 (WLT 428, 704, 783 DYE) and the only roofed RCL-class example, RCL2260 (CUV 260C).

Bond Bros., Willington

Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2RH/Plaxton Paramount 3200 C53F A112 EPA is now in stock.

Brewers FB

Now in stock from Midland Red West are Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ/Duple C48Ft 118/20/1 (C985-7 HOX) and TRCTL11/3R/Plaxton C48Ft 124-6 (A656/7 VDA, A678 KDV). 118/20/1 are now re-registered NIL 2451-3 and 124-6 similarly as NIL 2455/6/4 respectively.

Tiger/Duple 167 (VCL 461, *B223 WEU*) is now re-registered B491 XOW (VCL 461 being carried by the diesel-electric hybrid vehicle with Provincial) and Tiger/Plaxton 180 (F618 XWY) is now NIL 2450.

Tiger 130 (MKH 98A) is now with the Newport Pipe & Drum Band.

Duple 425 140 (300 CUH, *LIL 5068, E207 BOD*) is now re-registered E218 WWW and Volvo B10M-61 199 (E218 WWW, *YR 3939*) is now 300 CUH.

Mercedes-Benz L608D 217 (D217 LCY) and Leyland National 809 (WWN 809T) have been withdrawn as have ancillary Ford Transit 18 (C400 AHT) and L608D 206 (C206 HTH).

Brighton & Hove GA

First of the next batch of Scania N113DRBs with East Lancs DPH47/31F bodywork to arrive are 761-4 (P861-4 VFG), with coach seating and in standard red fleet livery for use on service 712 (Brighton-Eastbourne) and 729 (Brighton-Tunbridge Wells), with 769 also confirmed as P869 VFG and 765-8 due as P865-8 VFG. Noted at the same time at East Lancs were orange-liveried 770-7 (P870-7 VFG) with bus seating to H47/31F configuration.

Service 5 (tangerine) livery is now carried by 150-3/6 and 723/4/6 whilst Service 7 (mauve) livery is now worn by 15.

Leyland National 150 now has an electronically-controlled rear *destination* indicator fitted — number displays are relatively common, but not destination displays.

Brighton Blue Bus GA

The Go-Ahead Group acquired this company, on 21 May with the intention to merge operations with Brighton & Hove.

Another two Leyland Atlanteans, 2 and 14 (TYJ 2, 14S) have now gone to Guide Friday for open-top conversion at Stratford-upon-Avon. However, other Atlanteans are now being repainted for continued use, 8 (TYJ 8S) as a new overall advert for Gala Bingo. Guide Friday's TYJ 3S is now converted to open-top and at work on — the Brighton Tour, based at Lewes BBB depot. TYJ 6S is expected to go to the Edinburgh Tour, however.

Leyland Leopard/Duple Dominant Driver trainer 99 (MNK 424V) is now in a dark blue and white livery, promoting the company's success in gaining Investors in People accreditation.

Lewes Coaches Volvo B10MT/Plaxton Paramount 4000RS CH55/9Ft 4189 (PJI 2845) is to carry the Sussex County Cricket Team this season and now proudly boasts lettering accordingly.

Optare Excel demonstrator P443 SWX has been inspected but not placed into service.

British Airways

London Heathrow-based Leyland National 2s BU397/8 (B361/2 LOY) have been sold to Aviation Defence, also at Heathrow.

Buffalo Bus, Flitwick

Daimler Fleetline WWJ 771M has been sold and exported to a buyer in Holland.

Bullock, Cheadle

DEM 761Y is now re-registered JIL 8213.

Camm, Nottingham

Leyland National PVF 366R has been used as a source of spares and was scrapped at the end of March, still wearing MTL livery.

Capital Citybus

Delivery of further new Volvo Olympians have allowed the last borrowed Leyland Titans to return to Metroline/MTL.

Carter's, Colchester

Unfortunately, following the reported loss of one of its Essex County Council contracts, long-serving ex-Eastern National Bristol RELL6G/ECW SVW 274K has been withdrawn and offered for sale. It was of note in Eastern National stock as having been the last Bristol RE in the Southend area and had operated after refurbishment by this operator in this fleet in a very similar livery.

Castle, Speke

Former Sheffield Omnibus Leyland Atlantean CPO 345W are in stock.

Chalkwell, Sittingbourne

New coaching stock comprises Dennis Javelin/Plaxton Premiere 3200 C53F P101-3 MKK.

VIB 5072 and 9485 have passed to Ludlows of Halesowen, D575 PKW to Thamesdown Transport, C490 TBC to Ronda Coaches of Southend and BBW 24V to Sovereign Leisure of Hartlepool.

Cheltenham District ST

New Iveco 49.10/Mellor B17F 607-15 are now due for summer delivery, to oust Ford Transits.

Cheltenham & Gloucester ST

As with Cheltenham District, Ivecos 601-6 are due as Ford Transit replacements imminently.

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander (Belfast) B25F N717 KAM is numbered 717.

Transit 190D 644 (C644 SFH) has been withdrawn, twin 632 (C632 SFH) passing to Wacton Trading, Bromyard (dealer). Bristol VRT/SL3 214 (RFB 617S) has passed to Ripley, Carlton (dealer).

224 is in blue contract colours — not corporate colours.

Chester City Transport

Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 3200 C55F 28 (XFM 211) is now reported fitted with bus seats.

Classic, Annfield Plain

Latest additions to stock are MCW Metrobus DR104/9/Alexander RL H45/31F ACM 770X and DR102/29/Alexander DEM 758Y, both ex-MTL Group.

Leyland National VKE 568S has been withdrawn and is being cannibalised for spares.

County Bus & Coach CW

A diminutive delivery this month is MBT865 (P865 VTJ), an LDV Convoy/Whitacres B8FL in allover white.

Leyland Atlantean AN194, 249/51 and Tigers TL27, 33 have passed to Ripley, Carlton (dealer), lucky Leyland National SN312 (UPB 312S) finding its way into preservation.

Cross Road, Kilmblesworth

Three Leyland Atlanteans now in stock for schools work are ex-County Bus KPJ 242/52W and ex-Bell, Spennymoor LUG 91P.

Crosville Cymru CW

Leyland Tiger CTL89 (SIB 7689) and Bristol VRT/SL3 DVG503 (YMB 503W) have been withdrawn

Another Bristol VRT/SL3 now under cannibalisation is DVL635 (UMB 333R), at Chester.

Ex-Maidstone & District Mercedes-Benz L608D D30 KKE has been in use as an engineers van around the west area.

Cumberland ST

Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW O43/32F 2102 (JFR 2W), is now completed, starting a new career as an open-topper here as part of the 'Lakeland Experience' fleet after its low-bridge contretemps in Blackburn earlier this year.

Open-top Bristol VRT/SL3 2076 (UWV 622S), branded 'The Borrowdale Bus' now has a cycle-rack added to its rear in continental fashion.

Cygnet, Royston

Volvo-engined Leyland Nationals UHG 728R and CWX 666T have been on loan, followed by a trial of Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusader B38F P829 BUD.

Freight Rover Sherpa 5 (D912 PRJ) has gone to B-Line of Royston.

Denis's, Dukinfield

A further Dennis Dart SLF with Plaxton Pointer bodywork is P743 HND, used on service 216 alongside its new midis.

Derwent Coaches, Swalwell

Latest addition is ex-Greater Manchester Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver B27F K881 UDB.

Don's, Dunmow

Ex-Ipswich Leyland Atlantean/Roe HDX 907N is now converted to single-door H43/29F layout, but has been out of use with accident damage for a time.

Dunn-Line, Nottingham

New is Volvo B10M-62/Jonckheere Mistral P235 AUT, whilst acquisitions to record are, from Nottingham, Renault-Dodge S56/Reeve Burgess DP35F D34/5 URC, now in livery; from Stagecoach Manchester, Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/Northern Counties H43/32F FVR 245/6V in allover white; from unconfirmed sources, DAF/Plaxton Paramount 3500 C53F H196/7 TCP, in livery as is Volvo B10M-53/Plaxton Paramount 4000 double-decker IIL 2948.

Now in fleet livery are Atlantean BTV 651T, Scania/Jonckheere bus C353 SVV, Leyland Tiger coach B522 YTC and Volvo/Duple Dominant bus D498 NYS.

Green bus livery has been discontinued in favour of a uniform white, with blue, turquoise and purple for buses and coaches, with silver wheels. Cinderhill base has been vacated in favour of enhanced premises at Basford

Some interchange of vehicles between Dunn-Line and recently-acquired subsidiary Lamcote has also been in evidence, with Dunn-Line-liveried Atlantean BTV 653T noted with Lamcote legal lettering, DAF coach H196 TCP carrying both Dunn-Line and Lamcote fleetnames on its Dunn-Line livery. Lamcote vehicles still wear its silver, green and black colour scheme, albeit applied recently in Dunn-Line layout.

Durham Travel Services

New Volvo B10M Expressliners P25 WNL and P87 XNL are at work.

Eastbourne Buses

New Ikarus-bodied DAF saloon 19 is to be the first of its type in the UK fitted with the 8.31-litre turbocharged engine and its delivery has now slipped back. A further saloon, 20, is due for June/July delivery, an Ikarus-bodied DAF coach being due for May/June as 102.

Recently-acquired ex-Greater Manchester Leyland Atlantean open-topper 61 (VNB 132L) was undergoing repaint in mid-March.

Leyland Atlantean 68 (JFV 315S) is now with Philips Coaches of Penrhiwceiber.

Eastern National FB

A further two Dennis Lance/Northern Counties Paladin B49F are 1510/1 (P510/1 MNO). The entire batch has been allocated to Colchester, whilst interestingly, Optare Excel demonstrator P844 SWX has been on loan at Chelmsford, being noted at work on service 36.

An acquisition from Thamesway is Leyland Olympian ONLXB/1R/ECW DPH42/30F 4009 (C409 HJN), now at work in Clacton. Also from Thamesway comes Mercedes-Benz L608D 9018 (D228 PPU) for use as a driver trainer.

The demise of the once all-powerful Leyland National is now almost complete with the culling of 1861-3/5/72/4/85/90 (YEV 319-21/3S, ANO 271S, BNO 664/75/80T).

East Kent ST

Acquisitions from Hampshire Bus are Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash B40F 457/8 (N457/8 PAP) for the 511 group of services at Ashford, whilst the same source has also offered Volvo B10M-55/Alexander PS DP48F 641/2 (N641/2 LPN) as further support vehicles for 'Kent Compass' services 100/200. Indeed, 632-4/9-42/59-61 will form a dedicated fleet for these services for which crews are receiving basic French language training.

Iveco 49.10s 3, 4 and 97 (H103/4 EKR, G97 SKR) have passed to Houston Ramm, Sudden (dealer), Leyland Nationals 1345/6 (PJJ 345/6S) to Hardwick, Barnsley (dealer).

Bristol VRT/SL3 7666 (XJJ 666V) has been cannibalised at Thanet.

Group codes

- BL — Blazefield Holdings
- CW — Cowie Group
- EY — EYMS Group
- FB — FirstBus
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- MT — MTL Holdings
- NX — National Express
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- TR — Transit Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

Brighton & Hove's new tangerine livery for service 5 is worn by several buses including 1985 Leyland National 151 (C451 OAP). TERRY S BLACKMAN

An impressive coach delivered to Henry Cooper, Annitsford, is this Volvo B12T with Plaxton Excalibur 51-seat body, registered EX 180 — or is it EXI 80?.

East Midland ST

Acquisitions from Busways are Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton C44Ft 659-62 (J420 HDS; KSU 463, *J422 HDS*; J424 HDS; M808 JTY), all in National Express colours for use on service 230 (Nottingham-Gatwick Airport), jointly operated with Busways. Additionally, Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R/Plaxton C47F 183 (PJI 4314) is now back in stock here.

Three Dennis Dart/Alexander Dash B40F are presently in stock — 418-20 (P418-20 KWF), not four as first thought.

An arrival from Midland Red South for use as a driver trainer is Bedford YMQ/Duple C45F T5 (MCS 139W).

Former Chesterfield Leyland Atlantean 167 (SUA 123R) is now under conversion into a mobile youth centre for the Central Dales Youth Bus Stop Project.

Eastville, Bristol

Three Bristol VRT/SL3s added to stock are VPF 288S and WJM 822T ex-London & Country and YUM 516S ex-Southend.

East Yorkshire EY

Leyland Leopard/Plaxton 190 (8225 KH, *GKH 190T*) is now re-registered RKH 792T and Leyland Olympian coach 543 (B111 WAT, *B107 LPH*) is now B782 FOG.

Solitary Volvo B6/saloon 261 (L261 AKH) is now outshopped in maroon and cream with Scarborough & District fleetnames, suggesting a move there. Further senior Bristol VRT/SL3s to gain the smart maroon livery are former Trent 960 (RAU 810R) and United 733/50 (CPT 733S, DUP 750S), although put into perspective by the fact that sisters 766/71-4/98, 881/2, 959/61-5/7-72/4/6-8/81-4/9/92/4 (PPH 466R, CBV 7, 12-14S, GRF 698V, GAK 481/2N, RAU 807R, RKH 961-5R, SKH 967-9R, UKH 970-2/4R, WAG 976-8S, BKH 981-4T, EKH 989T, BTU 327S, FTU 394T) have all been retired in recent months. 994 is now being cannibalised but 993 (BRF 688T) is reinstated after initial withdrawal.

Further withdrawals are of Iveco 49.10 44 (D44 OKH), Bristol RELL open-topper — one of only two extant — 178 (PHN 178L), TL11-engined Leyland Olympian coaches 543-6 (B782 FOG, B161 AKH, B109 LPH, B162 AKH) and Leyland Fleetline 894 (MLK 656L).

Now sold are Leyland Royal Tiger Doyen 15 (C310 JAT) to North East Bus Breakers, Annfield Plain (dealer); 'Handi-rider' Leyland National 169 (RAG 169R), Bristol RE 178 (PHN 178L), Fleetline 894 (MLK 656L) and AEC Regent V driver trainer T1 (BOW 503C) all to Ireland, Hull (dealer); Olympians 543-6 (B782 FOG, B161 AKH, B109 LPH, B162 AKH) to Northern, Anston; Bristol VRT/SL3s 766/84 (PPH 466S, YRF 684S), Leyland Atlanteans 942/51 (ORH 639P, RRH 233M) and VRs 986/8 (EKH 986/8T) to PVS, Carlton (dealer). 160 has later passed to the St John's Ambulance at Aylesbury.

Fishwick, Leyland

Leyland Titan pre-production prototype TMX 535R (*VLT 240, BCK 706R*) has now happily found a new home in preservation, most appropriately in Leyland.

Leyland Atlanteans XTB 728/9N bought new and ex-Thamesdown Leyland Fleetlines UMR 194/6T were advertised for sale recently.

Fuggles, Benenden

Dennis Dart L503 HKM has been withdrawn and sold.

G&G, Leamington Spa ST

Leyland Leopard 4 (230 HUE) is now back in service, used on former D. R. Grasby service 274 (Leamington-Kineton) bedecked in corporate stripes.

Bristol VRT/SL3 1932 (ONH 846P) is correctly numbered 936.

Gee Vee Travel, Barnsley

Bristol LHS6L/Plaxton C35F JSU 342T is now in stock ex-Goulding of Knottingley.

Go-Ahead Group North East GA

Further new arrivals are 10.7m Optare Excel/B37F 8129-32 (P929-32 ACU) for Coastline stock. Together with 8125-8 (P925-8 ACU) mentioned last month, they wear a new easy-access red, yellow and cream livery, they are shared between Percy Main and Wallsend depots and are to local 'Nexus' DiPTAC specification.

A lone addition for Gateshead & District, for use as a driver trainer, is Bedford YMT/Plaxton Derwent B55F 9914 (D914 URG), now in red, white and blue livery and allocated to Gateshead (Sunderland Road).

An inter-company transfer is of Leyland Tiger 5128 (C682 JGR) now with Northern General and based at Chester-le-Street in appropriate livery (ex-Wear Buses). MCW Metrobus MkII 3640 (A640 BCN) is now back in service, allocated to Gateshead & District, following an extensive rebuild by Marshalls of Cambridge — also ex-Wear Buses.

Leyland Atlantean 3471 (AUP 371W) has been withdrawn, being last of this chassis type with Wear Buses stock and now passed to OK Travel for further service. Also withdrawn are Renault S56s 274/82/3/5/7 (E274 BRG etc) and 294 (E294 ETY).

Greater Manchester FB

New deliveries continue — again only of midi- and minibuses, recent receipts being Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B36F 6025 (P325 LND), 6099 (P748 HND) and Wright B36F-bodied 6519-30 (P519 LND etc). 6025 is at Bolton, 6099 and 6519-30 at Oldham.

Arrivals of Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver B25F from Yorkshire Rider fleets have continued also as 1802/8-22 (M236/11/8/47/45/33/4/25/09/12/4/3/5/42/07/44 VWU).

Green Bus Service, Great Wyrley

East Lancs-rebodied Leyland Leopard 20 (UCY 843S) is at work, with short rear overhang noted.

Grey Green CW

In consequence of the new Dennis Dart SLFs, the last four former coach Volvo saloon rebodies, 858-61 (B858-61 XYR), have been withdrawn as have MCW Metrobuses 467/72 (DTG 367, 72V), leaving just 466 (DTG 366V); all six Ikarus-bodied DAFs, 926-31 (J926-31 CYL), have also been withdrawn as have Scania K92CRBs 107/8 (E107/8 JYV).

County Bus has absorbed 467/72, 858-61, 926-9 whilst Leaside Travel has B10M-61 coaches 874/6 (C874/6 CYX) and South London 930/1.

Harrogate & District BL

Leyland Lynxes 385/6 (G297/6 KWY) have been withdrawn and despatched south to other Blazefield fleets.

East Yorkshire's latest batch of Volvo Olympians with Northern Counties Palatine bodywork are allocated to depots that have not recently received new buses. 609 (P609 SAT) is allocated to Elloughton. TONY WILSON

Hartlepool Transport ST

Sad news is that the remaining seven Bristol RELLs were all due to have finished service at the end of April, thus bringing to a close no less than 30 years of stalwart service by this popular type here.

Bristol RELL 95 (JAJ 295N) is reported sold to Whiting, Pontefract (dealer).

Holloways, Scunthorpe

Additions to stock are ex-Mainline Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/Roe H45/298D CWG 773V (with CWG 756V for cannibalisation) and AN68B/1R/Alexander H45/29D JKW 302W.

Hunters, Seaton Delaval CW

New are Optare Metrorider/B31F 56-60 (P56-59, 61 XTN).

Now confirmed withdrawn is Freight Rover Sherpa 44 (D919 VCN), whilst 89, 95 and 99 (KUB 542V, OWJ 166X, DWT 663T) have passed to North East Bus Breakers, Annfield Plain (dealer).

Keighley & District BL

The first of three Leyland Olympian ON2R50C13Z4/Northern Counties DPH43/27F due into stock from Yorkshire Coastliner is 910 (K5 YCL). The trio will release TL11-engined Olympians for cascade to Sovereign.

New Volvo 514 is named *White Star*.

Leyland National 2 272 (PWY 584W) has been sold to Yorkshire Traction and has settled with Barnsley & District.

Kentish Bus & Coach/ Londonlinks Buses CW

Leyland Atlantean AN172 (XPG 172T) remains active and has not been withdrawn as yet.

Leaside Buses CW

Leyland Titan T100 (CUL 100V) is now converted to open-top, retaining dual-door configuration as O44/26D. Together with similar T83 (CUL 83V) it is for use in Leaside Travel livery on Lea Valley service 333 to replace non-standard Leyland Atlantean AN110 (MPJ 210L) and Leyland Fleetline DMS2291 (THX 291S), both already withdrawn as are T85, 95 (CUL 85, 95V). Volvo B10M-61s DV1, 2 (185, 205 CLT) have passed to County Bus.

MCW Metrobus M1437 and T100 both wear the new-style red/white/blue Leaside Travel livery, in place of the older red and gold scheme.

Leicester Citybus FB

Acquisitions are Leyland Leopard PSU3F/4RT/Duple Dominant I Express C49F 18, 26, 30 (VNH 168/7/6W) ex-Kelvin Central, Volvo B10M-61/Jonckheere Jubilee P599 C51Ft 4 (D885 BRS, *XWL 539*) from Mairs of Aberdeen and Dennis Falcon HC SDA416/Northern Counties B45D 628 (C108 SDX), first of four due from Ipswich, the latter currently on loan to Northampton Transport. Also acquired are Robin Hood-bodied Iveco 49.10s E937 KEW and D906 HOU for spares, but they have nonetheless been allocated temporary fleetnumbers 800 and 801 respectively.

Dennis Dominator 241 (FUT 241V) has been dispensed with to North, Sherburn-in-Elmet, (dealer) for scrap as have Leyland Leopard trainers 912/3 (BWG 831L, YSD 353L) and Dominators 200/45 (YRY 200T, FUT 245V) some time ago, all after cannibalisation. late-surviving Scania-MCW Metropolitan formerly 308 (GJF 308N) was cut up by Wigley, Carlton (dealer) recently.

Leicester Citybus and Northampton Transport are warmly welcomed to the ranks of operators contributing to these pages, thanks to joint managing director Joe Gilchrist.

Ten Optare Excels are reported due imminently, following use of Excel demonstrator P443 SWX on service here. Kinch Excel P201 BNR has also been inspected.

Leisurelink, Newhaven

The fleet now comprises Leyland Titan PD3/4/Northern Counties FO39/30F 422 (AOR 157B, *422 DCD*), Leyland Atlantean PDR1A/1 Special/Park Royal H43/28D 53 (JPL 153K), Daimler Fleetline/Alexander H43/31F 117/20/5 (DLJ 117L, OEL 120/5M), Leyland Fleetline/Alexander H43/31F 146 (AJT 146T), Leyland Fleetline/MCW H43/33F 515/37 (SDA 515/37S), 710/4/8 (SDA 710S etc), 800/72/91 (SDA 800S, TVP 872/91S), 951 (WDA 951T) and Atlantean PDR1/1/MCW CO44/31F 925/8 (ADV 299A, *925 GTA*); 928 GTA).

Additionally, Daimler Fleetline/Alexander H43/31F 121/3 (OEL 121/3M) have been on loan from Christchurch Buses.

Leisurelink (Wales), Cardiff

This season, the principal vehicles on the Cardiff Tour are ex-Eastbourne Leyland Atlanteans KHC 814/5K, these being Guide Friday vehicles, but which carry joint Guide Friday-Leisurelink (Wales) fleetnames.

The ex-King Alfred Roe-bodied Leyland Atlantean PDR1/2 HOR 590E will again provide backup for the Cardiff Tour, is to operate a number of tours of Merthyr Tydfil on behalf of Merthyr Borough Council and will be available for private charter.

The ex-Cardiff AEC Regent V 408 DBO will also be available for charter and the company is also using rare ex-Newport Longwell Green-bodied Leyland Titan PD2/40 178 (PDW 484). Leisurelink Charter is available on (01222) 522202.

London & Country CW

30 new Dennis Dart SLFs are now due in total.

Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 466/7 are now in dedicated 'Airporter X38' livery in turquoise and light blue.

Colchester Leyland Atlantean 73 (TPU 73R) has been on loan at Leatherhead, deputising for AN197.

London Central GA

Longterm delicensed Optare Spectra SP19 (19 CLT) has been noted in Camberwell being used as a source of spare parts to keep the others of this class active; however, it is expected to be returned to service.

Leyland Titan T683 (OHV 683Y) is now allocated as a driver trainer, whilst trainer Titan T172 (CUL 172V) is a new overall advert for Classic FM Radio. Overall advertisements are not carried by normal red-bus pcvs — only driver trainers are allowed to be so adorned.

London General GA

MCW Metrobuses M1371/3 (C371/3 BUV) are now available as driver trainers as well as for normal service, whilst M853 (originally OJD 853Y) is now re-registered SGC 671Y. Accident-damaged trainer M209 (BYX 209V) has been sold, replaced in Plymouth on training work by M293 (BYX 293V).

Mercedes-Benz 811D MA127 (H427 XGK) has been sold, joining its sisters at Oxford.

London United/Westlink

Driver trainer Volvo B58-61/Duple Dominant II VT1 (YTA 612S) has been sold.

M&E, Shoeburyness

Now in stock is Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW KOU 796P ex-Stephenson, Rochford.

MK Metro

The opening fleet comprises:

Volvo B6-50/Alexander DP40F 426-30 (L426-8 XVV, M429/30 BNV)
Leyland Olympian ON2R56G13Z4/Alexander H51/34F 650-3 (H650-3 VVV)
Leyland Olympian ON2R50C16Z4/Alexander H47/32F 711/2 (K711/2 ASC)
Bristol VRT/SL3/6LXB/ECW H43/31F 723/5/32-7/7/50/1 (LFJ 853/4W, FDV 809/38V, LFJ 868W, FDV 811V, FAO 417/8V), 871-3/89-91 (TNH 871-3R, XNV 889-91S), 902/3/8/10/26/48/53/4/72 (CBD 902/3T, FRP 908/10T, ONH 926V, VVV 948/53/4W, KRU 846W).

An acquisition from Cheltenham District is Mercedes-Benz L608D/Alexander B20F 654 (C654 XDF).

Current former United Counties fleetnumbers are expected to be retained for the time being at least, as they do not clash with that fleet. 34 operating discs are allocated to Huntington and 93 for Milton Keynes operations.

All vehicles, apart from 871 and 903 (overall advertisements for Cambridge Regional College), are in Stagecoach colours and retained Stagecoach United Counties fleetnames in April. It is thought that the orange, red and blue stripes will be replaced by a single wide blue band with overall white being retained as the base of the livery. 654 carries Stagecoach Metro fleetnames.

61 (D161 VRP) has passed to PVS, Cudworth (dealer), 79 (D179 VRP) to PVS, Carlton (dealer), 624 (OAL 624M) to Wigley, Carlton (dealer).

MTL London MT

Former R&I Ford Transit 087 (C945 FMJ) is now numbered MR87 and Mercedes-Benz 811D 90 (F90 GGC) is similarly MR90. The last two non-renumbered R&I units are 609D coach 303 (D85 DOT) and Setra S215 HR 901 (D733 JJD). Ex-R&I DAF SB220/Ikarus 539 (H539 YCX) is apparently now referred to as DAF539, similarly Optare-bodied 849 (F849 YJX) and also ex-Merseybus Optare-bodied sister 848 (F848 YJX), known as DAF849, 848.

Maidstone & District CW

The last batch of Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B40F of the present order will now be 3233-47 (P233-47 MKN), the last two to carry Maidstone Park & Ride livery. Meanwhile, deliveries received are SLF/Pointer B40F 3217-21/3-32 (P217 MKL etc), Volvo Olympian/Northern Counties Countybus Palatine I H47/30F 5926-37 (P926-37 MKL) and H45/30F 5938-43 (P938-43 MKL). 5938-43 wear dedicated service 101 livery (green, with light green stripe, cream window surrounds and diagonal sash). All these vehicles feature nearside numeral displays. On a minor detail, Dart SLFs were first delivered with dark green wheels and Volvo Olympians with black, but all deliveries are now received with 'Cowie Group' silver wheels.

An acquisition to note is of Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton Paramount 3500 III C37Ft 2852 (G802 BPG) from Speedlink Airport Services. Kentish Bus Talbot Pullman/B17FL 836 (F393 DOA) is also now officially in stock here as M8.

Now withdrawn for disposal are the last Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D, 1000 (C203 PCD), Rootes-bodied L608Ds 1001/2/5/10/22-4/7/32/8 (C201/2/5/10 EKJ, D22-4/7, 32/8 KKP), Bristol VRT/SL3s 5108, 5835/9 (PKM 108R, BKE 835/9T) and Leyland Atlanteans 5723/4/6/31-5 (LJA 644/50P, ONF 680R, LJA 635/48/52P, ONF 654/5R). The last L608Ds are expected to have come out of service on 4 May when Dart SLFs take over operation of services 176/182. However, VR 5128 (WKO 128S) is now reinstated for further service.

Sales have been of Leyland Olympian coach 5441 (GKE 441Y) to Wealden, Five Oak Green (dealer), 1000 (C203 PCD) to Crosville Cymru, 1001/2/23/7/38 (C201/2 EKJ, D23/7, 38 KKP) to Midland Red North with 1010/22/4/32 (C210 EKJ, D22/4, 32 KKP) to follow suit; 5724/6/35 (LJA 650P, ONF 680/55R) to The Shires for further use at High Wycombe; 5733 (LJA 652P) to a farmer at Southfleet, whilst Ripley of Carlton (dealer) has taken 5723/31/4 and 5835 (LJA 644/35P, ONF 654R, BKE 835T), former Mercury 1053 (C53 KDT), 1204/7/31 (F204/7 AKG, F231 BAX), 1361 (D361 JUM) and 1749 (LHS 749P) all passing to Wealden, Five Oak Green (dealer).

A planned unification of fleet numbering across the Invictaway Group was due to take effect on 1 April.

New Enterprise now has DAF MB230LT615/Van Hool Alizee C53Ft 7036 (F621 HGO) from London Coaches, with a further pair of DAFs from Hughes-DAF, Gomersal (dealer) in the shape of Plaxton-bodied 7040 (F899 GUM) and DAF SB2305DHS585/Duple 321 C57F 7042 (J36 GCX), the latter new to London Buses and latterly with Bluebird, Aberdeen.

Leyland Leopard 7032 (YKP 975X) has been withdrawn for disposal, 7012 (JKM 166V) having been sold to Wealden, Five Oak Green (dealer).

Majestic Motorways, Moorends

Leyland Atlantean AN68B/1R/Alexander H45/29D JKW 302W is now in stock from Mainline, outshopped in maroon and cream livery.

Matthews, Heswall

Ex-West Midlands Leyland Fleetlines WDA 909/73T have been acquired.

Maun Crusader, Mansfield

An acquisition to record is Leyland Atlantean AN68/1R/Northern Counties H45/32F MNC 513W.

Metroline

The London Omnibus Traction Society records that the new Dennis Dart SLFs on order will be classified DL for 10m-length units due in mid-May and DLS for shorter 9.2m units due in mid-July.

Leyland Titan T438 (KYV 438X) has been sold to Village Group Tours, Garston, whilst T302/19/43/57/90/9 and T481 have returned off-loan.

Metropolitan, Darlaston

Dodge S56/Northern Counties B25F E406/7 YMR and B31F F75 AKB are now in stock.

Midland Red North CW

New are further Dennis Darts as 1316/7/9/20 (P316/7 FEA, P319/20 HOJ).

Dart/Alexander ALX200 demonstrator P942 EMS has been at work here, numbered 9996 for its stay.

Midland Choice

New is Mercedes-Benz 709D/Plaxton Beaver 34 (P134 MEH).

Midland Red South ST

Two further ex-Busways additions are Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R/Alexander H49/37F 989 (AVK 143V) and H48/33F 990 (MVK 521R).

Ford Transit 390 (C705 FKE) and Atlantean 973 (UVK 298T) have been withdrawn.

Midland Red West FB

Leyland Tigers 1001-4/16 (FEH 1Y, B102-4 JAB, A658 VDA) have been withdrawn. 1001/4 have passed to Eastern Counties, 1002/16 and 1018/9 (B567/8 BOK) to Western National, the latter pair (together with 1017 (B566 BOK) later also moving to Eastern Counties. 1003 (B103 JAB) had still not been returned to its rightful owner by April. Leyland National 547 (NOE 547R) has passed to Whiting, Ferrybridge (dealer) for scrap.

Adjustments to seating capacity have been effected to 1002 (B102 JAB), now C44Ft ex-C50Ft; 1004 (B104 JAB) now C40Ft ex-C50Ft; 1006 (B106 JAB) now C49Ft ex-C43Ft; 1007 (B107 JAB) now C49Ft ex-C39Ft. 1006/7 have now again been altered, to C50Ft ex-C49Ft.

Minsterley Motors, Minsterley

VW LT55/Optare CityPacer F999 PLA is now in stock in predominantly white livery with blue stripes and fleetnames.

Newport Transport

Scania K113CRB/Plaxton C53F 3 (J97 NJT, *A16 XEL*) in stock from Excelsior, Bournemouth, joining twin 2 (J96 NJT, *A15 XEL*) here. It has ousted Leyland Tiger 40 (XFM 203, *C73 KLG*), now with Boyd & Chick of Newport, now carrying its original registration mark again. Plaxton-bodied Tiger 1 (J705 UBO) is now re-registered with the ex-Crosville Bristol LD6G/ECW registration XFM 203.

Nip-On, St Helens

Leyland National PTD 672S has been withdrawn.

Group codes

BL — Blazefield Holdings
CW — Cowie Group
EY — EYMS Group
FB — FirstBus
GA — Go-Ahead Group
MT — MTL Holdings
NX — National Express
ST — Stagecoach Holdings
TR — Transit Holdings
YT — Yorkshire Traction

A recent delivery to Longstaff, Mirfield, is Dennis Lance/Plaxton Verde P2 JJL. PAUL WIGAN

Norbus, Kirkby

Ex-Mainline Leyland Atlanteans CWG 686/93V are in use here, but MNC 504/7W have been sold to Blue Triangle of Bootle, MNC 504W later returning here.

Northampton Transport FB

Former Ipswich Dennis Falcon HC SDA416/Northern Counties B45D, now Leicester Citybus 628 (C108 SDX) has been on loan, freshly attired in latest Leicester livery of almost allover cream, minimally relieved by a maroon centre stripe capped with bright red.

Further Acquisitions are Bristol VRT/LL3/6LXB/East Lancs H50/36F 46, 47 (UFW 40, 41W) from Road Car (former Lincoln City stock); Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R/Duple C49F 29 (HVG 803V) from Kelvin Central; Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R/Plaxton Paramount 3200 Express C49F 17 (FFK 312, *BUT 19Y*) from Leicester Citybus and Volvo B10M/Plaxton 3500 C49Ft 9 (PSU 630, *D783 SGB*) from Rider Group.

Northern Bus, North Anston

Former Hartlepool Bristol RELL6L/ECW 2191 (GEF 191N) is reinstated for a further spell of service, expected to be until June/July time at which point it will be sold.

Daimler Fleetline/Northern Counties open-topper 0376 (TCD 376J) is now re-registered 223 FWW.

Northumbria CW

Now confirmed withdrawn are Leyland Leopard 201 (BBR 996S), Leyland Nationals 715/38/9/56/72/87/8 (GOL 404N, JTH 777/8P, SGR 129R, LUP 903T, NPK 253/7R) and Freight Rover Sherpas 902/3/5/7/20/5/46/52/3/60 (D902/3/5/7/20/5/46/52/3 VCN, D960 EOW).

201, 715/38/9/72/87/8, 902/3/5/7/20/5/46/52/3/60 all passed to North, Sherburn-in-Elmet (dealer). 201 is now with the Scarborough Starlights Jazz Band.

The ranks of several types are now reduced to near-extinction, with the Bristol LH now down to 8 (plus one trainer), the Freight Rover Sherpa down to five (plus one with Hunters) and the Leyland National down to 12 (plus two care buses, one at Hunters and one trainer).

Reader Andrew Barnes writes to advise that he and Steve Simister have acquired Leyland National 788 (NPK 257R) for preservation, having been the longest-serving SNB at Dunton Green depot (from new in December 1976 to July 1990), prior to its sojourn with Kentish Bus as its 440 and later here.

North Western CW

Acquisitions for Arrowline stock are Volvo-engined Leyland National 1151/1R/B52F 461 (OAH 552M), 11351/1R/B52F 462 (KHT 121P) and 11351A/1R/B49F 463/5 (UHG 741R, VKE 566S). These are allocated to service 86 (Liverpool-Garston), in allover white and branded 'No Fuss Bus'. Not previously recorded as added to Arrowline stock was Volvo B10M-60/Plaxton C49Ft K624 FEC (*K4 JFS*) from Fishwick of Leyland; it was quickly withdrawn, however and sold on to a dealer after only four months.

433 (OOX 813R) is an additional DAF-engined Leyland National 11351A/1R from West Midlands, whilst 434 (OOX 818R) is now to B50F layout, ex-DP45F, having been downgraded just before sale.

Bee Line has now withdrawn the last of its original Bee Line minibuses, these being Dodges 9, 11/8/9 and 21, 24 (D409 NNA etc).

Inter-company transfers are of 1178 (M178 YKA), 1215 (M215 YKD) to Arrowline from North Western; 26, 27 (D426/7 NNA) as crew buses to Arrowline from Bee Line, along with 88, 89 (G118/9 TND) for normal use. 131/3 (J297/9 NNB) are now in North Western stock from Arrowline. 352 (MCA 678T) is now in Bee Line stock from North Western, as is 9 (D409 NNA) as a recovery vehicle, whilst Bee Line 79, 94 and 127 (G109 TND, G124 TJA, M127 YCM) are now in North Western stock. Dodges 6 and 13 (D406/13 NNA) have been on loan to Granada studios.

North Western Leyland National 350 (GMB 670T) has passed to Martin, Middlewich.

Courtesy of the Ribble Enthusiasts Club, the former West Midlands Leyland National position can be neatly summarised viz:

Bee Line has 400-19/24 (MIL 5580/1/2/73-5, 6676-81, 7612-9/24, *ROK 468M, TOE 484/6-91/7-9/2/5/6, 505/10/1/3/22/08N, GOK 618N*), 428-31/3-6 (OOX 805/7/9/10/3/8R, TVP 837S, AOL 11T)

Liverline has 420-3 (MIL 7620-3, *TOE 512/23N, ROK 469/70M*), 425-7/32 (OOX 801-3/11R)

North Western has 450-9 (DOC 20, 30/2/6/8, 43/5/7, 21/2V).

Nottingham City Transport

Deliveries continue here with the arrival of further Volvo Olympian/East Lancs H49/35F 492/3 (P492/3 FRR) in South Notts livery for allocation to Gotham. The arrival of this pair has enabled green-liveried Olympians 485/6 (L485/6 NTO) to return to Parliament Street.

The balance of Optare Excel/B46F is now in stock as 542-4 (P542-4 GAU), at Parliament Street.

New Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton Beaver DP31F is 199 (P199 ENN) is allocated to South Notts stock at Gotham, but notably in green and cream.

Volvo B6 511 (M511 TRA) is now back in stock, interestingly rebodied with a new East Lancs Spryte body to replace its accident-damaged Alexander Dash original body.

All of the 1996 delivery of Mercedes-Benz 709Ds, 101-10 (N101-10 WRC) are now upseated to B31F from B30F whilst Reeve Burgess Beaver-bodied Renault Dodge S56 167 (H167 ANU) has been lengthened in the company's workshops along the lines of the Mercedes-Benz 709Ds completed recently, but apparently the end result is not quite as happy and so it may remain a one-off. It is now to B28F layout, ex-B25F.

Many single-deckers are now proudly carrying vinyls on their cove panels proclaiming '100 Years of Public Service 1897-1997' — an example of rightful municipal pride now sadly denied so many towns. A second bus now outshopped in commemorative livery is East Lancs-bodied Scania 351 (L351 MRR), in trolleybus livery of green with three cream bands edged in black. Sister 352, in Corporation Tramways livery, now sports smart period-style advertisements for Kimberley Ales and the *Nottingham Evening Post*, along with the obligatory 'Bovril' advertisement on its 'staircase' representation at the rear.

Volvo/Plaxton coach 787 (77 RTO) is now re-registered for a seventh time to B704 LRA, having been 77 RTO, UTV 222S, B871 XWR, 4831 WA, B161 XWR and EBW 40A! It is expected that Bova 797 (M784 RVY) will be the recipient of 77 RTO.

Leyland National 2s 718/9 (B718/9 LAL) have undergone what is described as impressive internal refurbishment, but have not received new livery as had their predecessors. Volvo Citybus 316 and Leyland Lion 394 now have had their upper saloon rear windows panelled over with consequent detrimental effect to their appearance.

Renault Dodges 134/5 (D134/5 URC) have passed to Dunn-Line.

Oxford GA

New are further Volvo B10B/Plaxton Verde B51D as 629-43 (P629-43 FFC), at work on service 52 (Blackbird Leys).

PMT FB

New are Dennis Lance/Northern Counties Paladin B43F SDC868-70 (P868-70 MBF). New Mercedes-Benz 810D/Plaxton are also due, commencing with MMM232 (P232 URE).

Parfitts, New Tredegar

Leyland National 475 (YBO 150T) has been withdrawn, but quickly reinstated again, but sister 499 (BHY 999V) and Bristol VRT/SL3s 698/9 (EWR 656/7Y) are now in main-fleet Rhondda stock.

Pathfinder, Newark

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Dormobile B29F 8 (L848 WDS) is now with Phoenix.

People's Express

New is Mercedes-Benz 0814/Plaxton Beaver II P697 HND.

Pete's Travel, West Bromwich

New deliveries are of Mercedes-Benz 0814/Plaxton Beaver II P857 GRC, Mercedes-Benz 811D/Beaver P686/7 HND, Iveco 59.12/Mellor P938 EOP, P347 FOL and Dennis Dart SLF/Wright Crusader B38F P827/8 BUD. Mellor/Mercedes-Benz minis N627/8 BWG, bought new, are also at work with Busy Bus Co fleetnames. Mercedes-Benz 709D/Alexander M396 KVR and ex-Dennis's, Dukinfield N590/2 WND are also in stock as are ex-Stagecoach Ivecos E33 PSR, F58 AVV and G914/21/3 KWF and Dennis Dart 9.8SDL/Plaxton Pointer B40F N608 WND from Cheshire Bus & Coach (dealer).

Former Cardiff Bluebird Dodge S56s D708/9 TWM, D861/2/4/5 NVS and D412/20 NNA are also in stock.

Pickthall, Arlecdon

Leyland National 11351A/1R/B49F WBN 468T is now at work.

Pilkington, Accrington

Ex-Midland Red South Leyland National 10351B/1R/B44F WFR 392Y is now in stock.

Leyland Nationals re-registered are BNO 669T to PIB 5513, MCA 675T to PIB 7014 and BNO 661T to PIB 5952.

One of the latest-style MCW MetroRiders delivered to Northumbria's Hunters fleet, P57 XTN. A. D. GLEN

One of two new Dennis Javelin GX/Plaxton Premiere 3500 for Metrobus, Orpington, P215 TGP. P. R. WALLIS

Pioneer, Rochdale

Dodge S56/Northern Counties B23F F139/40 HNC are now at work ex-Blue Bus, Horwich.

Plymouth Citybus

Volvo B10M/East Lancs double-deck coaches 177/8 (H177/8 GTT) are now fitted with electronic indicator displays at front, with rear numeral repeaters and are outshopped in bus livery.

Leyland Atlanteans 139/41 (VYJ 139/41V) have passed to Thomas of West Ewell.

London General MCW Metrobuses M271/93 (BYX 271/93V) are currently at work on driver training duties here for that concern.

Powercrafts, Blackburn

CVE Omni/B23F G627 CLD is now in stock ex-Stanwell Buses, London.

Primrose, Leominster

Now in stock are Leyland Leopard PSU3F/4R/Willowbrook C47F DDM 32X, PSU3E/4R/Plaxton Supreme IV DP53F CPY 705T and Iveco 49.10/Robin Hood B23F F882 CJC.

Bedford YMT/Wadham Stringer B61F MKP 181W is now in stock from parent Yeomans of Hereford fleet stock.

Provincial FB

The diesel-electric hybrid vehicle 100 (VCL 461, *E350 AMP*) had still not entered service by end-March.

UVG demonstrator N804 GRV has again been on loan.

Vandal-damaged 213/26/37/49/56/60/9/70, 714, 805/8/11/3/21 were all back in service by end-February.

Now withdrawn are Iveco 49.10s 124/9/38/40-6 (F24 PSL, F129 PBP, G138 WCW, J140-6 KPX), Leyland National 335 (TPX 42T), 412 (THX 242S) and recently-acquired Leyland National 2 407 (MDS 864V).

Reading Buses

Another VW LT55/Optare CityPacer added to the low cost unit is B21F 223 (E556 GFR) ex-Blackpool Transport.

Newbury Buses CNG-powered Metrorider 614 (M614 NRD) is now back at its old haunt, service N1, with its new modified Cummins B-Series engine, replacing its original modified Land Rover Discovery engine.

The last-remaining Mercedes-Benz L609D with Newbury Buses is 213 (E468 CGM), which continues to soldier on despite recent service changes.

Reay, Fletcherdown

Former Brighton & Hove Dennis Javelin 12SDA1928/Duple C53Ft MIL 9579 (*G509 SAP*) is now in stock.

Red & White ST

Ex-Viscount Bristol VRT/SL3 LWU 466V has materialised as 84*8* and not 847 as expected.

A further Leyland National sent to Stagecoach Devon stock is 646 (BUH 211V), whilst Leyland Tiger/Duple Laser 927 (AKG 214A, *A227 VWO*) is now back in service.

In answer to reader query, it is thought that perhaps former driver trainer Bristol FL6G/ECW 20 AAX may be a record-holder for its number of re-registrations. Latterly with Gospel Express of Cross Keys as AAX 307A, it had previously been AKG 296A, AKG 282A, AKG 232A, AKG 197A, AKG 162A, AKG 134A, AAX 630A, AAX 600A, AAX 589A, AAX 562A, AAX 529A, AAX 516A, AAX 488A, AAX 466A, AAX 451A, AAX 312A and, originally, just simply 20 AAX in a less complex world!

Rhondda

New are Dennis Dart SLF/Marshall B43F 56-58 (P56-58 XBO) whilst Leyland Tiger 904 (AAL 587A, *SDW 920Y*) and MCW Metrorider 2101 (F101 YWO) have been withdrawn. Tiger 901 (AAX 311A, *SDW 912Y*) is now with Island Coachways, Isle of Wight, 904 passing to Stevenson of York, 2101 having also departed. Metrorider 2107 (F107 YWO) is the one with Davies of Merthyr Tydfil, not sister 2109 (F109 YWO), this being with an as-yet unidentified operator in the same area.

Now drafted in from subsidiary Parfitts' stock is Leyland National 499 (BHY 999V) and also Leyland Tiger/Duple Dominant DPs 698/9 (EWR 656/7Y).

Plaxton-bodied Tiger 701 (A19 RBL) is now re-registered F603 CET prior to possible sale.

Ribble ST

The complete batch of 16 Dennis Lances new to Selkent and later transferred to East London, is now due in stock here, being converted from B39D to B47F layout and repainted in Stagecoach colours before delivery. First noted are 11SDA3101/Alexander PS 182/92/4 (J102/12/4 WSC), initially placed in store.

Now in stock for use as a driver trainer is Leyland Leopard PSU3E/3R/Alexander B53F 1523 (GSU 863T) from Kelvin Central.

Now confirmed withdrawn are Leyland National 2s 838/46/7/68/78/81 (DBV 838W, JCK 846/7W, LFR 868X, RHG 878/81X).

Bristol VRT/SL3 2034 (URF 662S) has passed to Yeomans of Hereford, accident-damaged Leyland Olympian 2102 (JFR 2W) to Cumberland.

Richards, Moylegrove

Mercedes-Benz 609D/Reeve Burgess E238 MBX is in use ex-Ffoshelig Motors, Carmarthen.

Road Car YT

Now in stock from Yorkshire Traction is Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R/Plaxton C53F 465 (1533 HE, *MSV 926, YAL 511Y*) and from ABC Travel of Ainsdale comes Optare Metrorider MRO1/B33F 350 (H793 HEC).

Further Bristol VRs withdrawn are ex-Lincoln East Lancs-bodied VRT/LL3 1835 (NFW 35V) and standard VRT/SL3 1949 (LVL 804V).

Leyland Atlantean 1316 (BNE 751N) has gone for preservation to the SELNEC Preservation Society, 1835 to Bluebird of Hull and Leyland National 2817 (HHA 137L) to PVS, Barnsley.

Rossendale Transport

Three Dennis Dart SLF with East Lancs bodywork and a pair of Optare Metroriders are reported on order.

Fleetnumbers confirmed for recent acquisitions are of NCS 117W as 73, BSG 551W as 74, D367 RHS as 97 and SND 418X as 138.

Leyland Atlanteans 18, 19 (STE 18, 19S) and ex-Hastings Top Line/Eastbourne 129/30 (VDY 529/30T) have been withdrawn.

Selkent ST

Leyland Olympian L260 (VLT 20) is now converted to single-door DPH42/30F configuration from DPH42/26D.

Similarly now single-door is withdrawn Leyland Titan T1084 (B84 WUV), outshopped in allover white prior to sale. T791 and T1013 (OHV 791Y, A613 THV) have suffered some cannibalisation after delicensing also.

Serverse, Tamworth

Ex-Fylde D912 NBA is in stock.

Shamrock, Pontypridd

Acquisitions are Volvo B10M-62/Jonckheere Mistral P98 VGD and Bova Futuras N121/2 YLS from Silver Choice of East Kilbride, 98 and 121 at Newport and 122 at Barry, the latter in full Thomas livery.

Bristol VRT/SL3 VHB 673S is now based at Abercynon and Mercedes-Benz 709D M252 KNR is now at Barry. VKU 74, 75S are on contract work at Abercynon. Volvo TIB 1224 is now outshopped allover cream and is thought to be for sale.

Leyland Leopard SWP 888V has been withdrawn, Mercedes-Benz L608D D989 ARE sold to Jones of Login.

Shearings

Unusually, acquisitions are, from Park of Hamilton, Volvo B10M-60/Van Hool C53F L649/55 ADS (*HSK 647/8*) whilst Scania K93CRB/Plaxton C53F 269/73/8 (J269 NNC etc) have been taken back into stock again from dealers.

The Shires CW

New vehicle orders now call for 15 Volvo Olympians for delivery later this year (nine for Watford for service 321 and six for Aylesbury for service 280), along with 10 further Dennis Dart SLFs and 10 Mercedes-Benz minis.

Following the renumbering of the fleet, non-contract and private hire operations of Checker Cars of Watford (based at Garston and Watford premises of The Shires) were taken over on 24 April. Thus brought into stock were:

Ford Transit/AVB M8 1108 (J976 AKY)

Mercedes-Benz 609D/PMT C26F 2165 (WIB 1114, *E428 YDM*)

Mercedes-Benz 609D/Crystals C24F 2166 (J465 UFS)

Ford Transit/Deansgate M12 2167 (SLU 261, *WET 880, D969 MDB*)

Ford Transit/Dormobile B16F 2168 (G40 OHS)

Ford Transit/Deansgate M14 2169 (G735 PGA)

Ford Transit/Crystals M13 2170 (J964 NLL, *J413 UUK*)

Volvo B10M-56/Plaxton C51F 4038 (ADZ 4731, *KNP 3X*)

Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton C53F 4039 (WIB 1113, *B504 CGP*)

Volvo B10M-61/Plaxton C53F 4040 (YIB 2396, *C510 LGH*)

Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool C49F 4041 (E512 YGC)

Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/2R/Duple C53F 4042 (WIB 1118, *YPD 145Y*)

Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3RZ/Duple C57F 4043 (YIB 2397, *D296 RKW*)

DAF MB200DKTL600/Plaxton C53F 4044 (WIB 1115, *FKK 615Y*)

4044 had previously been in this fleet from October 1990 to February 1993 as LD6, being one of the vehicles inherited from Lee & District of Chesham. Most of the above former Checker vehicles are in white livery with black relief, 4041 still wearing the colours of former owner Epsom Coaches.

The company repainting programme is nearing completion, with very few vehicles which are to be retained remaining in older liveries.

Also taken into stock, from Maidstone & District and nominally for spares, are Leyland Atlantean AN68A/1R/Northern Counties H43/32F 5901-3 (LJA 650P, ONF 655/80R). However, they were quickly withdrawn, along with Leyland Nationals 3007/21/2 (GNV 660N, YPL 405/36T).

3118/32/5/7 are now route-branded for services 5/15 at Luton, 3175-8 for services 4/5 at Hemel Hempstead, 3186-8 for services W1/2 and 3189/90 for service 373.

Whiting of Ferrybridge (dealer) has taken 1999 (F634 UEF), 3005/6 (MNH 573V, YPL 457T), 5004/6/8/10 (WBD 874S, JPE 234V, KPJ 239W, A142 DPE) for scrap, 1202 (D934 EBP) also sold for scrap.

2163/4 (D208/10 SKD) are now being used as trainers at Watford and have LDT Training Services as fleetnames.

I am again indebted to Mark Garrett of the PSV Circle for these detailed notes and also those for MK Metro this month.

Group codes

BL — Blazefield Holdings
CW — Cowie Group
EY — EYMS Group
FB — FirstBus
GA — Go-Ahead Group
MT — MTL Holdings
NX — National Express
ST — Stagecoach Holdings
TR — Transit Holdings
YT — Yorkshire Traction

The latest batch of Oxford Volvo B10B/Plaxton Verde have, unusually, two-door bodywork. No 631 (P631 FFC) is seen in Oxford in May.
P. R. WALLIS

Silcox, Pembroke Dock

A new Dennis Javelin GX290/Jonckheere Mistral is due imminently, whilst Dennis Dart SLF/UVG demonstrator P844 KOT has been on trial here.

A batch of 12 Plaxton Derwent II DP54F-bodied Leyland Tigers is reported in acquired from Ministry of Defence stock, the first five recorded being 89 (E98 LLP), 91 (E125 ODE) and E628/62/72 WWD. Apparently a large number of bus and coach arrivals are due here.

Now withdrawn and scrapped are Leyland Leopards MHS 19P, OSJ 623R, AAW 411K, HDE 617N, NDE 440F and Bristol LH SPK 119M.

Now sold are **Dennis Dart** M174 BDE and Leyland Atlantean CWG 707V. Most significantly, marking the end of Bristol single-deckers for this company — once well-known for its affection for Bristol chassis — are further sales of Duple Dominant-bodied Bristol LH6Ls LDE 165/6P (to Malta) and of ECW bus-bodied LH6L KTT 40P.

Silverwing, Heathrow

New are Dennis Dart SLF/UVG Urban Star B34F P504/5 MOT, which also feature offside centre entrances for Heathrow Airport work.

Smiths, Shennington WM

Inter-company transfers are of 8003/4 (K659/8 BOH, *K3, 4 CEN*) from main Travel West Midlands stock, now renumbered here to 67, 66 respectively, and 145 (SDA 628S) to TWM.

DAF SBR3000/Plaxton 48 (245 DOC) is now re-registered to MIL 9765.

Southampton Citybus

It is reported that FirstBus was to acquire the company around mid-May.

Low-floor Dennis Darts 404-7 (P404-7 KOW) are being actively marketed as 'Low Down Buses', a leaflet being produced even detailing the departures on services they usually operate.

Leyland Olympian coaches 287/8 (SIB 3272/3) have passed to Marchwood Motorways of Totton.

Southend Transport CW

Further Dennis Dart SLF/Plaxton Pointer B40F are DSL064-7 (P264-7 FPK), which have displaced the final Bristol VR, 307 (WTU 473W) and *all* remaining Leyland Nationals, 713/23 (LPB 218P, GGE 167T) and rebuilt/DAF re-engined 745 (PJI 3745), along with Leyland Fleetline 208 (JTD 388P), for some time the oldest vehicle in the fleet. The only P-registered Fleetline now left at work as 212 (JTD 392P) and 745 was enjoying a stay of execution into May.

A repainting programme has now commenced for Leyland Olympians, and to everyone's surprise, 282 (MUH 282X) has emerged in the simplified Dennis Dart-style livery with a much larger area of white and less blue. Fortunately, it retains blue upper saloon window surrounds and roof; twin blue fleetnumbers appear at front and blue fleetnames feature on sides below lower saloon windows.

Southern National

Three further Leyland Leopards are now in stock, these being Alexander B53F-bodied 3565-7 (YSF 99S, GMS 291, 310S).

South Lancs Transport, St Helens

Acquisitions are Dennis Falcon H SDA413/East Lancs B40F B51 XFV and B43F A50 LHG from Hyndburn. These will join the Volvo B7 (not yet in service) and Leyland Tigers B26, 27 ADW and D154 THG in the Schools Services fleet, replacing the remaining Leyland Leopards.

Tiger B43 UCK is now the only remaining full-sized vehicle in regular service use, usually on service 309 (St Helens-Ormskirk). Bristol LH6L/ECW AFB 597V is now regarded as semi-retired and thus sees only occasional use.

A re-acquisition is Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R/Willowbrook Warrior B48F VAJ 785S from Stevensons (that was rebodied by South Lancs back in 1990) although this is expected to be sold onward.

Now withdrawn are Leyland Leopards PHN 570R, LPY 458W and UWY 81X; the last two Leopards now at work are 49 XBF and LPY 462W, both due for withdrawal in July.

South London CW

Now in stock are DAF SB220LC550/Ikarus B48F 930/1 (J930/1 CYL) from Grey Green.
The rather different red and cream service 159 livery, much akin to Brighton, Hove & District of yore, is now extinct following the repaint of the last three AEC Routemasters to carry it, RM1978, 2179 and the last RM of all, RM2217.
Accident-damaged RM18 (VLT 18) is now being scrapped by the company.

South Wales Transport FB

Mercedes-Benz 709D/Reeve Burgess Beaver B25F 294 (E294 VEP) is now back in stock, rebodied with a new Plaxton Beaver B23F body.

Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 220-2/6/7/9/30 (D220 LCY etc) have been withdrawn.

Stagecoach Devon ST

New Volvo B6LE/Alexander 701-14 (P701-14 BTA) took over operation of service 12 on 13 April, under the banner of 'Stagecoach Easyrider'. A few were noted at work the previous week and 701-3 were used for an impressive official launch. Dennis Dart/UVG demonstrator N804 GRV has been at work also, being recorded on service X39 (Exeter-Plymouth).

Ex-Cambus/Viscount Bristol VRT/SL3s 938-40/3/5/6 (RAH 265/8W, LWU 467V, PWY 4**8**W, LWU 470V, JUB 650V) are now in full Stagecoach colours and in use, whilst additional 942 (PWY **40W**) has been at work in Torquay in Viscount colours. NUM 341V has been noted at rest at Exeter still in Cambus livery, LWU 468V appearing in service briefly at Torquay.

Convertible open-top VR 935 (VDV 135S) now wears an overall advertisement livery for Paignton Zoo and the Paignton and Dartmouth Steam Railway. Company publicity announces the resumption of open-top operation to Kingswear this summer, with services 120 (Torquay-Paignton, hourly) and 200 (Torquay-Paignton-Kingswear, hourly) in operation.

A further ex-Selkent Mercedes-Benz 811D/Alexander B28F is 589 (F614 XMS); twin F631 XMS is numbered 593. Former East Kent Bristol LH6L/ECW B43F HJT 45N is in use as a driver trainer.

Ex-Busways D409/17/8 TFT, E448 AFT are in store at Exeter as are ex-Red & White 382-4 (G919/20/4 KWF), still numbered 297-9 and only 383 with Devon fleetnames. Leyland National WUH 166T has also been noted freshly painted but out of use at Exeter.

Ford Transits sold are 57, 74/9, 82, 90/4/9 (C511, 670/83/8/99, 709/18 FFJ), 101/2/6-8/11/4/33 (C720/1/6-8/33/6/67 FFJ).

Stagecoach Manchester ST

The tide of new deliveries continues apace, all of which are only single-deck. Latest receipts are of Volvo B10M/Northern Counties DP47F 869-74/90/2 (P869 MNE etc), similar but B48F 875/6/9/80/2 (P875 MNE etc), all at Stockport. Note that there will be no vehicles numbered 888 or, in the current B6LE series, 333.

Photographers may wish to note that it is now anticipated that the faithful Leyland Atlantean may well disappear completely by the end of the year here, their demise having been hastened by the Stagecoach takeover.

Stagecoach South Group ST

Now in stock from Cambus is Leyland National 2 NL116L11/1R/B49F 150 (PEX 620W), delivered to Coastline at Worthing. Twin 151 (PEX 621W) has now received a roof pod as will 150, these taken from withdrawn East Kent Mk1 examples 1345/6 (PJJ 345/6S) which lost their pods before sale.

Now set aside for disposal are Hampshire Bus Leyland National 186 (CBV 776S), an accident victim, and Bristol VRT/SL3 7359 (DBV 29W).

Now sold are Hants & Surrey Iveco 49.10s 473/85 (D473 WPM, F695 OPA) to Houston Ramm, Sudden (dealer) and Hampshire Bus Bristol VRT/SL3 7382 (EAP 982V) to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

Volvo Citybus 7301 (F301 MYJ) has lost its Vultron electronic front indicator display in favour of a conventional blind display (removed from a Dennis Dart). Volvo B10M saloon 626 (L626 TDY) now has seatbelts fitted for use on Sussex Bus/West Sussex County Council school contracts which stipulate these.

Convertible open-top Leyland Titan PD3s 0409/24 (409/24 DCD) and Bristol VRT/SL3s 7621/3 (UWV 621/3S) were seasonally decapitated at Hastings during March and April, VR open-topper 0770 (HKE 690L) being resuscitated at the beginning of March and used in conjunction with the Hastings half-marathon shortly after. PD3 0424 appears to be permanently reallocated to Portsmouth from its traditional Worthing and it made itself useful on a tour of Woking, Guildford, Crawley, Eastbourne, Portsmouth, Andover and Reading during April, being used by students from the Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School collecting for charity — an example of the goodwill use to which such 'heritage' vehicles can be put. Leyland TD1 open-topper 0813 (UF 4813) is also expected to move to Portsmouth, but has been mechanically challenged at Worthing in the meantime.

A fire at Petersfield outstation (started in some parked lorries) caused very serious damage to Dennis Dart 525 (J525 GCD) and also slight damage to Leyland National 1247 (LPF 605P), but fortunately VRs 392, 678 and 7352 were unscathed. The body of 525 was destroyed and so if the chassis is salvageable, it may be rebodied.

Leyland Titan 7244 (EYE 244V) unfortunately hit the headlines when it hit its roof on the unforgiving metals of Sackville Road railway bridge in Bexhill recently.

Stena Line, Fishguard

Leyland Nationals UFG 51S and DNW 836T are in use a in the port area concourse at Fishguard, NPD 156L being ousted back to Newhaven from whence it came.

Swindon & District ST

Leyland National 2 383 (WAO 397Y) has been withdrawn and sold to Circle Line, Gloucester.

Bristol VRT/SL3 208 (NWS 288R) has been on loan *to* Circle Line, but has now returned to Swindon and is in use as a contract vehicle.

Thamesdown Transport

Dennis Dart/East Lancs Spryte B37F demonstrator P718 WFR has been on loan and put to work on services 17/18.

Dennis Dominators are now usually to be found on services 12/13, Dennis Darts and Falcon saloons on services 1/1A/1B

Thamesway FB

The 'additional' Dennis Dart SLF, 711 (P711 HPU) following the batch 702-10, was apparently to replace the long-awaited electric Dart. This project appears to have gone off the boil at present.

A further Leyland National to reach the end of the road is 1846 (WJN 566S), replaced by twin 1870 (YEV 328S) from Eastern National stock — thus underlining the common ownership of these two companies. Similarly, Leyland Olympian 4009 (C409 HJN) has gone to Eastern National stock as well, the latter retaining its few double-deckers and refurbishing them.

Timebus Travel, Watford

It is pleasing to record that the superlative AEC Regent III RLH23 (MXX 223) along with forward-entrance AEC Routemaster RMA37 (KGJ 612D) and AEC Regal IV RF491 RF491 (MXX 468) continue to be available for private charter.

Timeline, Leigh

Volvo B10M-60/Van Hool C49Ft 973/4 (H173/4 DVM) are now reacquired from a dealer, allocated to Bolton and in Timeline Travel livery.

Withdrawn 59, 61 (G59, 61 RND), 110/2 (H110/2 DVM) have been sold, 59 and 61 to Carlton of Hellaby (dealer).

Top Deck, Horsell Common

Another faithful Bristol Lodekka FLF6G/ECW to reach the end of the road here is VGS 375 (*VCS 375*), which has passed to PVS, Carlton (dealer).

Travel West Midlands NX

Further new saloons are Volvo B6LE/Wright B37F 552-7 (P552-7 LDA), B10L/Wright B43F 1432/4-7 (P432/4 EJW, P435-7 JJW) and the first of the CNG-powered B10Ls, Alexander B43F-bodied 1501 (P501 KOX).

Recent Mercedes-Benz 811D/Marshall 221-40 (P221, 722, 223-40 EJW) are confirmed as to B27F layout.

Merry Hill Minibuses became a subsidiary on 19 March, bringing into stock the following:
Freight Rover Sherpa/Carlyle B20F 110 (E514 TOV), 127-9 (F877-9 XOE), 131/2/4/7 (F881 XOE etc), 140-2/4/5/7 (H723 LOL, G227/8 EOA, H713/4 LOL, G263 GKG), 150/3 (G267/72 GKG, MCW Metrorider MF150/82/B25F 143 (E200 TUE) and Optare MetroRider MR15/B31F 154-9 (N468/9 WDA, N91-94 WOM), 160-9 (N95 WOM, N268-70, 811/2 XOJ, N148-52 BOF), 170-5 (N153-7 BOF).

133/5/6 (F883 XOE etc) are thought to have left the fleet just prior to takeover.

Transfers across from main fleet stock a month later were MCW Metrorider/B23F 608/11/5/32/3/41 (D608 NOE etc).

145 (SDA 628S) is now transferred back from Smiths of Shennington and has resumed its former fleetnumber, 6628.

Trent Buses

Fleetnumbers allocated to this year's new vehicle intake comprise 59-63 for the five Plaxton Premiere-bodied Volvo B10Ms, 275-83 for the nine Mercedes-Benz Varios with Plaxton Beaver bodywork and 917-36 for the 20 Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs.

Dart SLFs 901-6 (P901-6 CTO) are now route branded as the 'Calverton Connection'.

Now withdrawn are Leyland Nationals 426/31/3/4 (GNU 573N, KVO 431/3P, NRB 434P) and DAF coaches 1636/8 (D636/8 WNU). Leyland Nationals 479/83/90 and 542 (VCH 479S, XAL 483/90S, LUP 894T) have been stored.

Ex-Solent Blueline Leyland National 546 (UFX 852S) is now fully refurbished, repainted into Trent Buses livery and in service at Derby. DAF/Plaxton coach 1637 (D637 WNU) is reinstated at Trent Buses Derby also.

Of the substantial fleet of 211 coaches acquired from Barton Transport in July 1989, the only survivors are now Leyland Leopard 1568 (LNU 568W) and DAFs 1627/37/9-41/3 (B627 JRC, D637/9-41/3 WNU). Additionally, Leopard 1487 (RRC 487R) is retained as a driver trainer and 1583 (PTV 583X) as a staff bus.

Leyland Nationals 453/85/6/8/92 (PRR 453R, XAL 485/6/8/92S) have had their Barton logos replaced by Trent logos.

Volvo B10B/Northern Counties 116 (L116 LRA), Volvo Citybus 606 (F606 GVO) and Leyland Olympian 718 (C718 LTO) have been temporarily delicensed, 116 and 606 after sustaining accident damage.

Sales are of DAF 1626 (B626 JRC) to Ascot Coaches of Derby, Leopard 1588 (PTV 588X) to Go West Travel of Kings Lynn, whilst the cannibalised remains of Leyland National 427 (GNU 574N) has passed to Looms, Spondon, Derby (dealer).

UK North, Hadfield

Former Stagecoach Manchester Leyland Atlantean MNC 507W is now in stock, as a replacement for older HJA 112N. Atlanteans GDB 176N, KDB 686P, ONF 695R and ORJ 371W have also been noted at work.

United CW

The complete batch of 40 new Optare Metrorider MR35s has now been taken into stock, 2606-34 (P606-34 FHN) and 2640-5 mentioned last month for United stock and 2635-9 (P635-9 FHN) for Tees. The majority are route branded, 2606-10 as Roadranger (allocated to unbranded services), 2611-6 as Darlington Roadranger 22 (Minors Crescent-Mowden), 2617-24 Darlington Roadranger 23 (Whinbush-Skerne Park), 2625-31 Darlington Roadranger 21 (Whinbush-Firth Moor), 2632/3 North Yorkshire Roadranger 70 (Darlington-Ripon), 2634 North Yorkshire Roadranger 73 (Northallerton-Bedale), 2635/9 Loftus and Whitby Roadranger (allocated to unbranded services), 2636 Eston and Normanby Roadranger 10 (Normanby-Middlesbrough), 2637/8 Whitby and Esk Valley Roadranger (local routes, with Captain Cook logo), 2640-2 Darlington Roadranger (allocated to unbranded services) and 2643-5 as Bishop Auckland Roadranger (allocated to local routes, with Bishop's Palace Gateway logo).

Following the success of the branding of the above vehicles, 15 TMS vehicles are now receiving 'The Stockton-Thornaby connection' route branding for services 15, 16, 19, 84 and 85: 1540-2 for service 19 (Hartburn-Barwick), 1545 for 84/85 (Stockton-Thornaby), 4005-9 for 15 (Roseworth-Bassleton Court) and 4010-5 for 16 (Roseworth-Barwick). 1540-2/5 and 4005/9 are additionally branded as Crown Route.

Optare Excel demonstrator N330 EUG has been used at Darlington by United.

Tees maximum capacity bus-seated Leyland Tiger/Plaxton Paramount 3200 MkI Express coaches 1414/9/26 (EAH 887Y, A146 EPA, A909 LWU) are now reduced from B61F to a more usual B57F.

Mercedes-Benz 2401/29/33/41/2/4/5/70 (C401/29/33 VVN, D641/2/4/5 CVN, D470 EAJ) have been retrieved from disposal to withdrawn status, 2449/50/2 (D649/50/2 CVN) now being withdrawn, 2431/2 (C431/2 CVN) now set aside for disposal. Dodges 2501/11/66/71 (E501/11 HHN, E66, 71 KAJ) are all now for disposal as is Bristol VRT/SL3 755 (DUP 755S) and Leyland National 3656 (PUK 646R).

Disposals have been of Tees 1713 (MUP 713T) and TMS 1957 (REU 323S) to Crosville Cymru; United 2516-8/21/5 (E516 HHN etc) to Midland Fox; United 805/9/45 (XPT 805V, APT 809W, YNW 291S), Tees 857/8 (XNW 869/70S) and United 3501 (RJI 5343) all to Whiting, Ferrybridge (dealer); United 2401/29/33/41/2/5/9/70 (C401/29/33 VVN, D641/2/5/9 CVN, D470 EAJ) and Tees 2444 (D644 CVN) all to Tyne Tees Coachworks, Coundon; ; United 2450/2 (D650/2 CVN) to Clydeside Buses and United 2511 (E511 HHN) has been returned to an insurance company. North East Bus 96 (WHN 596M), TMS Leyland National 3656 (PUK 646R) and United 3727 (XGR 727R) have been scrapped by North East Bus.

Recent inter-company transfers have been of 277/9-83, 1714, 2460 from United to Tees, 845/95, 1327/8, 2465/73 from Tees to United, 2442/71/2 from United to The Eden, 2464 The Eden to United and 3753 from Tees to TMS.

The Eden Bus Services fleet now comprises Bristol VRT/SL3 832 (URB 822S), Volvo-engined Leyland Nationals 3502/3 (RJI 5344, 5755) and Mercedes-Benz 608Ds 2471/2 (D471/2 EAJ).

Bristol LH 1703 (LPT 703T) is now transferred from Tees to the North East Bus Driving School.

I am grateful to marketing officer Keith Lee for the majority of the above detailed notes this month.

Village Tours, Speke

Further former London Leyland Titans in stock are V16 (KYV 429X) from Worths of Enstone and V9 (OHV 689Y) and OHV 807Y, A899 SYE from London United. V16 is in livery and converted to single-door layout, V9 entering traffic in full Westlink livery. GYE 279W is now numbered V48 whilst prototype B15 CJI 6314 (*NHG 732P*) is now V40 and now has flat windscreens.

All Leyland Fleetlines are being withdrawn and sold, V9, V16 (NOC 598R, RCH 283R) being recent losses.

Ward, Alresford

Former GM Leyland Atlantean/Northern Counties XRJ 206S has been reported at work on schools contracts in the Clacton area.

Warrington Borough Transport

Dennis Dominators 43/5/6 (CLV 43X, A745/6 GFY), Leyland Atlanteans 107-14 (GHC 519/22/4/5N, UFV 113/6/7/20R) and Renault S56s 197-200 (D700 THF, D997/8 TKC, D37 NFU) are all confirmed withdrawn and were still in stock in April.

Wealden Beeline, Five Oak Green

Now is stock is Dennis Dart/WS Portsdown B43F 503 (L503 HKM) ex-Fuggles of Benenden and AEC Reliance/Duple Dominant B53F 309 (JTM 109V) from Maun of Mansfield but still in London & Country colours. Three ex-County Leyland Tigers with ECW C53F bodywork are also in stock, 427/33 (KIW 8513 (*WPH 427Y*); WPH 433Y) in use and 410 (TPC 110X) under preparation for service. In temporary use is Leyland Leopard/Alexander B53F 377 (TSJ 77S) ex-Maidstone & District, whilst the smart green/cream reliveried Volvo Ailsa, LKP 385P, is back in Kent once more but has yet to enter service.

MCW Metrorider 10 (E77 TDA) and Leyland Leopard/Duple Dominant 380 (SSU 780W) are now in fleet livery.

Dealer stock news is that a large number of Invictaway group vehicles have been obtained, the first disposals being of Bristol VRT/SL3s PKM 109/14R to Hardwick, Barnsley (dealer) for scrap and Leyland Olympian/ECW coach GKE 441Y to Stephensons of Rochford. Former Black Prince Ailsa NSP 321R has been exported to Eire, whilst Fuggles of Benenden now has ex-OK, Bishop Auckland Leyland Tiger/Plaxton JBT 835Y and Rambler of St. Leonards has Bedford YMT/Duple 320 C538 OTY.

I am grateful to Eric Baldock for continued detailed notes of his fleet.

Western National FB

Dennis Dart SLF 438 (P438 ORL) now has route branding for Plymouth City services 5/6.

Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 62, 67, 75, 89 (C677/82/90 ECV, C786 FRL), Leyland Leopards 3417/40/4 (PDD 101M, SFJ 140/4R), 3500/8 (KTT 808P, SFJ 158R) and Leyland Tiger 1019 (B568 BOK) are now held in reserve.

For sale are Ford 130 525 (F999 UGL), Fiat 79 553 (LFR 293X), Ford Transits 575/7 (C472 TAY, C527 TJF), Leyland Leopards 3530/5 (FDV 821/8V), Freight Rover Sherpa 7010 (D955 NOJ), Iveco 7015 (ELB 165T), Bristol LHS 7021 (TPJ 58S), Bedford YMT 7026 (YGL 649T), DAF FB2300 7041 (A831 NTW) and LAG Panoramic 7043 (F767 XNH).

Reduced for scrapping/cannibalisation only are 608Ds 40-42, 57, 58, 60, 68, 149 (C201/2/11 PCD, C672/3/5/83 ECV, C102 HGL), Bristol VRT/SL2 1084 (HTC 728N), VRT/SL3 WDM 341R, Leyland Leopards 3418/25/50 (XBF 57S, GTA 806N, SFJ 150R), 3515/55 (ETH 68V, JUP 113T), Freight Rover Sherpa 7007 (D741 JUB), Bedford YRQ 7023 (HAF 819L), Ford Transit C569 TUT and Tiger 1018 (B567 BOK).

Williams, Crosskeys

Mercedes-Benz 811D/Plaxton 10 (M528 KTG) is now re-registered M1 GWT.

Another MkI Leyland National still in occasional use is Volvo-engined 22 (CBV 790S).

Williamson's, Shrewsbury

New are Optare Excel P315/6 FAW, reported part-sponsored by the Rural Development Commission and looking smart in yellow/two-tone green fleet livery with route branding for service 576 above the windows and 'Green Bus 576' logos.

Williamsons Motorways, Knockin

Acquisitions are Dennis Dart/Plaxton Pointer N606/8 WND ex-dealer stock and in allover white.

Dart 9.8SDL3004/Carlyle Dartline B40F J327/8 VAW are no longer allocated to the Harlescott Park & Ride, so now carry green and yellow fleet livery.

Wilts & Dorset

Optare Prisma demonstrator P441 SWX has been on trial, numbered 1000 during its stay.

Bristol VRs 3418 and 4399 (UDL 675S, YEL 371T) are now back in traffic from Reserve to provide a float to cover for VRs undergoing major refurbishment as part of the two/three-year programme to enhance these vehicles. 3418 will normally based at Poole (to cover South District) and 4399 to Salisbury (North District).

The open-top fleet is to be increased this year from eight to nine vehicles with an additional vehicle allocated to service 150 (Bournemouth-Swanage) and will comprise VR 3351 (OEL 232P), Leyland Olympians 3906-12 (A989/90 XAF, UWW 12, 17X, CUB 67, 70Y, EWW 80Y) and faithful Bristol Lodekka FS6G 4001 (XSL 228A, *866 NHT*) *Nelly*. 4001 is to be used on service 152, based at Poole this year. Roofs will be refitted to all open-toppers by 7 September.

Leyland National 3744 (EEL 894V) has remained in normal stock, not transferred to Reserve as expected, as it has replaced a Bristol LH on work at Salisbury for which the LH became too small; however, the LH has in turn replaced a Metrorider for service 12, on which the Metrorider had become too small! LH 3856 (AFB 592V) is now allocated to Poole Engineers as a breakdown recovery vehicle, 3854 (AFB 590V) being restored from reserve to replace it.

Leyland Lynx/B49F 5051-4 (D165 HML, E51 NMT, E64, 65 WDT) are now in stock and based at Damory's Sunrise Park depot at Blandford.

Yeomans, Hereford

Current stock comprises Bristol VRT/SL2/ECW 19 (GHL 192L), Iveco 49.10/Phoenix B20F 24 (G41 XBK), Bristol VRT/SL3/ECW 33 (URF 662S), 49.10/Robin Hood B23F 37, 47, 48 (F883 CJC, E161/9 UKR), Bedford YMQ/Duple Dominant 60 (JKG 32W) and un-numbered 49.10/Carlyle F669 OPA.

VR 19 has continued in service following the arrival of 33, the latter now quoted as having a Gardner 6LX engine in place of its original Leyland 501 unit.

Yorkshire Bus Group CW

Deliveries of Dennis Dart/Alexander ALX200 for Yorkshire Woollen are 171-80 (P171-80 VUA).

Further West Riding Leyland National 2s retired are 111/24 (EWX 211Y, VBG 92V), whilst 106 (EWT 206Y) has remained with WR thus far and not migrated yet to Crosville Cymru as expected.

Inter-company transfers are of Yorkshire Leyland Lynx 319-21 to South Yorkshire at Pontefract and 357/66/7 to West Riding at Castleford; West Riding B10Bs 406-9 to Yorkshire at Heckmondwike; Yorkshire Olympians 604/8 to West Riding at Belle Isle; West Riding Dennis Lances 824-7 have gone to Yorkshire at Heckmondwike.

Yorkshire Coastliner BL

New are Volvo Olympian YV3YNA/Alexander DPH45/27F 426-9 (P426-9 UUG) and these mark the completion of the programme to replace all Coastliner double-deckers with latest-style Alexander Royale-bodied examples. Northern Counties-bodied Olympians 403-5 are due to go to Keighley & District and indeed, 405 (K5 YCL) has already transferred.

Yorkshire Rider Group FB

An unusual arrival for a three-month loan is Grampian Regional Transport articulated Mercedes-Benz 0.405G/Alexander AB60T 1 (K1 GRT). It has temporary fleetnumber 9001 and its first appearance was on the Scott Hall Road Guided Busway. Dennis Lance SLF 4079 has gone to GRT in exchange.

Kingfisher Huddersfield has withdrawn Mercedes-Benz 2242 (M242 VWU) and Bradford Traveller has similarly parted with 2244 (M244 VWU) and Leyland Atlantean 6027 (GUG 554N).

Recently-withdrawn Atlantean 6044 (HWT 30N) was quickly returned to service after just a few weeks at rest. Kingfisher Huddersfield caused a little interest by its loan of Atlantean 6285 (PUA 285W) to Bradford Traveller recently, using it on services 72/670 to Leeds and 651/652 to Otley/Ilkley.

All Scania 'Superbuses' now have illuminated 'S' signs at either side of their indicator displays now that 8646/7 have been so-equipped. MCW Metrobuses with passing-point or 'via' blinds in the range 7581-7605 are now having these blanked out, most having been disused for some time anyway.

Mercedes-Benz 2242/4 are now with Greater Manchester whilst Atlantean 6037 (GUG 564N) and Leyland Fleetline 7030 (MNW 30P) have passed to PVS, Carlton (dealer), Iveco 49.10s 2100-3/6/7 (G210-3/6/7 KUA) to Hardwick, Carlton (dealer).

Zak's, Fazakerley

MCW Metrorider E612 FRN is in stock.

Group codes

- BL — Blazefield Holdings
- CW — Cowie Group
- EY — EYMS Group
- FB — FirstBus
- GA — Go-Ahead Group
- MT — MTL Holdings
- NX — National Express
- ST — Stagecoach Holdings
- TR — Transit Holdings
- YT — Yorkshire Traction

CHANNEL ISLANDS

This month we catch up on news held over for some months owing to pressure on space — as always with grateful acknowledgement to the Channel Islands Bus Society (for which details are available by sending an SAE to Dr. J. R. Young, Flat 2C, The Nottingham Trent University, Clifton, Nottingham, NG11 8NS).

Guernsey

Guernseybus

A management takeover of Guernseybus & Coach was effected late last year.

Acquisitions to note following the restructuring are Optare Metrorider/B24F 74-77 (29728, 19676-8; *J963/7/71/2 JNL*), from Metrobus of Orpington but new to Kentish Bus — these are replacements for some recently-withdrawn Bristol LHs. Initially placed in service in Metrobus blue, 76 and 77 are now freshly attired in Guernseybus blue and cream.

A further Bristol LH6L/Plaxton coach acquired, but as a source of spares, is AFJ 720T ex-Western National. Parts from it are being used to repair accident-damaged coach 172, which had been partly dismantled after its contretemps. LH coach 171 is in service, registered 31921, this mark latterly carried by bus LH 62. LH bus 66 is also now re-registered 3338, this previously held 'on paper' by withdrawn Sherpa 8.

Further Freight Rover Sherpas withdrawn are 10 and 12 (18267/4).

Withdrawn Bristol LHs 51, 61/3/6/8 and 71 (29728, 54327, 19675, 31925, 31927, 31930; *OJD 48, 43R, KJD 403P, OJD 50R, KJD 437/2P*) have all been broken up by the company last year, previously-withdrawn Freight Rover Sherpas 8, 10 and 12 similarly. LHs 74, 81 and 87 have been broken up by Sykes, Barnsley (dealer) also. However, LHSs formerly 78, 79 and LH 88 are now all at work with Classic Coaches of High Wycombe on schools contracts, perhaps rewarding the efforts of CIBS stalwart Jim Young.

Bristol LH coach 163 is now in blue and cream livery, welcome repaints out of allover white now also being enhanced by softer, blue, wheels rather than black. Further good news is that the remaining LH/ECW bus stock is now to be outshopped in blue and cream, first being 72 (now renumbered 51), then 56, 52 and 51. This is the first time that LH buses have operated in any fleet livery other than bland overall white (other than many overall advertisement schemes, of course).

Vintage fleet Leyland RTL 19 (995) has now lost its once-proud (but valuable) three-digit registration, becoming 47310 instead. It is expected that the other vintage vehicles will similarly lose their distinctive four-digit marks also. On a more up-beat note, the forward-entrance AEC Regent III RT conversion, 19 (as yet unregistered here) is now complete internally — during March, it was being repanelled externally. The ever-popular Coastal K service started very early this year, on 22 March, then operating from Easter on through the season.

On loan to Yorkshire Rider in exchange for a low-floor Dennis Lance is Grampian Regional Transport articulated Mercedes-Benz 0.405G/Alexander No 1 (K1 GRT). It is seen on the Scott Hall Road Guided Busway.
TONY WILSON

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Particular thanks are due, this month, to the following for your most welcome contributions to Fleet News:

N. Ames, Anglia PSV Enthusiasts Club, *Anglian Review*, Andrew Bagshaw, Eric Baldock, Harry L. Barker, Andrew Barnes, Jason Beverley, Michael Bewes, K. N. Bladon, Simon Blake, M. L. R. Bott, Stephen Briggs, Julian Brinkworth, Bristol Interest Circle, *Bristol Passenger*, British Trolleybus Society, Andrew Browne, Chris Burley, P. D. Burton, *Bus Fare*, Peter H. J. Cackett, The Cambridge Omnibus Society, *Cambus*, Roger Carey, Rex Carlton, D. J. Carter, The Channel Islands Bus Society, The Cheltenham Bus Preservation Group, Andrew P. Churchill, *Cleveland Transit News*, R. N. Collins, Tony Coram, County Bus & Coach, Paul Crate, Crosville Enthusiasts Club, Cumbria Transport Society, Martyn G. Davies, Nigel Diplock, James Dunkley, Eastern Transport Collection, East Surrey, David Enticott, Essex Bus Enthusiasts Group, Michael Fowler, Ian Francis, Mark Garrett, Andrew Garon, Mark Garrett, Joe Gilchrist, Mrs Lezley Goodwin, Greater Manchester Transport Society, George W. F. Green, Andrew Grierson, Peter Haines, Peter Halls, Robert Hardy, Toby Hart, A. D. Healey, Hedingham Omnibuses, T. Hessey, Ian D. Hitchcox, A. F. Horner, Richard O. Huxham, Carl Ireland, Neil Jessop, Clive Johnson, J. Jones, Steven Knight, Paul Landymore, Lancaster & Morecambe PSV Society, Keith Lee, David Leeder, Leicester Citybus, Leisurelink (Wales), Byron Lewis, Gary Llewellyn, *Lincolnshire & Humberside Transport Review*, London Central, London Omnibus Traction Society, M&D and East Kent Bus Club, D. R. MacGregor, David Mallon, Manx Electric Railway Society, *Manx Transport Review*, Merseyside Bus Club, Metroline, Romana Mewett, Midland Counties PSV Society, Midland Red North, G. R. Mills, Peter Mudel, G. C. Nelson, Simon Nicholas, P. Nicholls, North East Bus, Northern Group Enthusiasts Club, *North Essex PSV News*, Northumbria Enthusiasts Club, Julian Osborne, The PSV Circle, Deric Pemberton, James Penton, People's Provincial, Timothy Phillips, John R. D. Podgorski, Brian Pope-Spencer, Ribble Enthusiasts Club, Road Car, Dave Russell, Keith Sadler. M. J. Saltmarsh, Steve Sanderson, Ken Savage, Richard Scott, Phil Shafe, Jim Shearer, Sheffield Omnibus Enthusiasts Society, Mark A. Smith, R. G. Smith, Solent Omnibus Club, Southdown Enthusiasts Club, Southern National, Southern Vectis, Eric Speckman, Speedlink, Alan Spencer, Staffordshire Bus Enthusiast Group, *Stage Carriage*, David J. Stanier, Phil Stockley, B. V. Sturman, Suffolk PSV Enthusiasts Group, Swindon Vintage Omnibus Society, *Terminus*, Dave B. Thomas, Nick Thomson, Peter Ticehurst, Transpire — The Chesterfield Bus Society, Travel West Midlands, Allen Trenchard, Trent Buses, Roy Turner, *Ultimate*, United Counties, United Enthusiasts Club, Russell Upcraft, Philip Wallis, Ian Warwick, R. M. Warwick, J. Watson, *The Waybill*, Michael Webster, *Wessex bi-monthly REVIEW*, The Wessex Transport Society, West Yorkshire Information Service, *West Yorkshire Metro Transport News*, *Wheels*, J. C. White, D. C. Wilder, Jack J. Wilkinson, Trystan Williams, Mark Willis, Eric Wilson, Wilts & Dorset, John K. Young, R. Yoxall.

Jersey

Blue Coach Tours

New are unusual Renault/Camo Minerva C45F 40/1 (J 82049, 82047), whilst acquisitions are ever-popular Leyland Swift/Elme C39F 32 (J 80977) and 39 (J 41130) ex-Island Coachways 6430 and Stonehouse Coaches as J515 LCW respectively.

Bedford 46 (J 62617) has been withdrawn and cannibalised, but not sold.

Dramatic news indeed is that this operator has been acquired by Tantivy. Blue Coach Tours has always been known for its smart vehicles — also for operating petrol vehicles (specified until 1984 as standard), of which several remain.

JMT

Press reports suggest that 10 new buses are now on order.

Dennis Dart 7 (J 75609) has been out of use for accident damage repairs after a contretemps with a VW camper at La Moye.

Major property changes are to see the garage, parking and administration functions transfer to La Collette and a new bus station placed on an island site behind the tourism offices.

Jersey Airport

Mobility Bus Leyland Nationals THX 121S, AYR 308T and BYW 403V are in use as airside transfer vehicles, not used on public roads and so not re-registered.

Pioneer Coaches

Another operator to acquire an example of the ever-popular Leyland Swift, with Wadham Stringer C39F-bodied E963 NMK from Harrogate & District.

Bedford SB5/Duple 2 (J 14610) has been scrapped at La Collette, twin 4 passing to Martin Perry, Wacton (dealer) along with 5 (J 13693).

Tantivy

An acquisition is Leyland Swift/Wadham Stringer B38F 2 (J 75668), formerly W&H, Crawley E968 NMK and now upgraded as C39F.

Now withdrawn are 2, 5, 10, 21, 22 (J 57367, 16315, 13969, 54663/2) along with disgraced Bedford/Duple Dominant fire victim 46 (J 44457) and similar confligrant VW 72 (J 54987). VW 104 (J 57079) is also now out of use, its number taken by LDV 16-seater J 45744.

A new allover maroon livery is in evidence, the traditional name of Tantivy being stressed, rather than the Tantivity Holiday Coach Tours of late.

Waverley Coach Tours

Ex-Quarriers, Bridge of Weir Leyland Swift F67 SMC is now in service as 5 (J 75736), the second Mercedes-Benz 811D/PMT Ami C33F in use being 17 (J 69526).

ISLE OF MAN

Isle of Man Transport

The PSV Circle records that registrations DMB 16-40R are reserved for the large batch of Marshall-bodied Dennis Darts.

Tours, Douglas

An interesting vehicle now in stock is ACE Puma/Van Hool C32F C767 USG, since re-registered MAN 111L.

Bedford YMT 8 (MAN 111P) is now re-registered DMN 296N and withdrawn.

Because of constant pressure on column space, it is usual policy for Fleet News chiefly to record vehicles belonging to operators of local service buses, rather than those of purely coach operators. It would not be possible to record all coach movements in these limited pages — readers keen to do so are warmly recommended to the fully-detailed monthly area news sheets of the PSV Circle.

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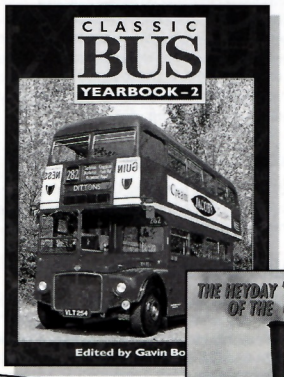

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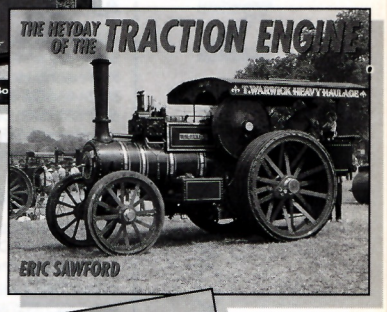

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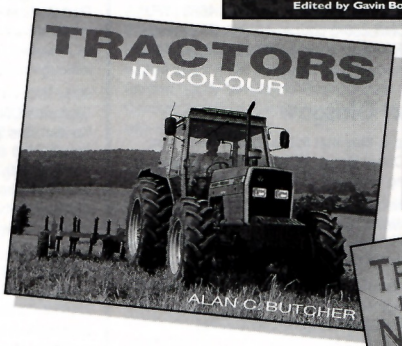

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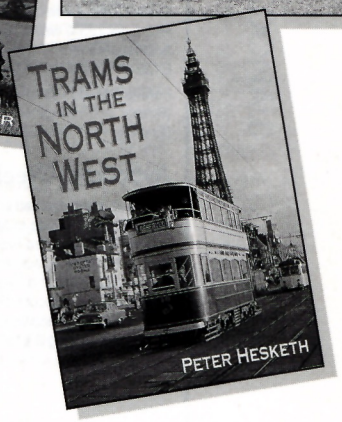

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Reports to be sent to Sandy Macdonald, **12 Morton Gardens, Maxwell Park, Glasgow G41 4AF**, to reach him by **17 June** for the **July** issue.

A1 Service ST

Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 270 (G72 APO) and 271 (G976 ARV), transferred to Western from Stagecoach South in February, have been allocated to this company. MCW Metrorider 240 (F118 YVP) was withdrawn in April and transferred to Cheltenham & Gloucester.

After a lengthy period when no more Volvo Olympians had been repainted into the blue and white livery, a concerted effort has been made in recent weeks with the result that by May 915/6/8/20/2/31/2 were in these colours and 921/30 were in the paintshop at that time.

AA Buses, Ayr

This long-established operator has finally succumbed to the inevitable, and the business was to be sold to Stagecoach subsidiary Western Buses at the end of June. Further details will be given next month.

Notwithstanding this development, two notable service changes were implemented on 9 June when the Ayr/Annbank and Ayr/Ayr Hospital routes were merged to create a through Ayr Hospital-Annbank service, and the Ardrossan terminus of the Ayr/Ardrossan route was changed from North Shore to MacDowall Avenue in the Parkhouse Road area.

Aberfeldy Motors

K813 HUM is a Van Hool C48Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-60 acquired in March, having previously been with Wallace Arnold Coaches.

Allander, Milngavie

P502/3 XGA are Van Hool C48F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s which were new in March. Other additions to the fleet that month comprised Duple C50F-bodied Volvo B10M-61s OJI 5506 (*OHE 264X*) and CBZ 4622 (*YFJ 67X, UTC 872, OHE 268X*) both ex-Marbill, Beith and Jonckheere C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s N812/3 NHS ex-Park, Hamilton.

Ashton, Port Glasgow

It was announced in May that this business was being acquired by the Cowie Group and being retained as a separate operating company from Clydeside.

Duple C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61 TOS 886X (*1528 RU, FHS 735X*) was acquired in March, ex-Clyde Coast, Ardrossan and is in use in full fleet livery. Talbot Pullmans E422 MAC and G872 SKE were sold in March.

Further services started on 16 April were peak hour 561 (Foxbar and Hillington via Paisley Cross) and 583 (Erskine, Park Drive and Glasgow, City Centre).

Avondale, Greenock

Reeve Burgess-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D510 RCK entered service in March numbered 120 and finished in a reversed livery style of white with red stripes. Similar D556 RCK was repainted into allover red and used briefly without a fleet number, but was thereafter sold in April. Dormobile-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 109 (L922 VGA) has had a white stripe added to its allover red livery, bringing it into line with the rest of the fleet.

Beekman, Airdrie

An unusual vehicle which joined this fleet in March was C811 JGB, a Bedford YMP with Lex Maxeta B37F bodywork last owned by Weir, Clydebank.

Bluebird Buses ST

Duple-bodied Leyland Leopards 167 (*4585 SC, PSO 27W, TSV 718, ORS 106W*) and 172 (*145 CLT, GTO 798V*) were re-registered HSR 136W and KRS 682V respectively earlier this year.

Plaxton Paramount C46Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61s 621/2 (J917/9 LEM) were withdrawn in March and have been transferred to sister company Western Buses together with PMT-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D 692 (B163 CMB).

Bridge, Paisley

This company cancelled the registration for its Erskine-Glasgow service with effect from 12 May to concentrate on the Erskine-Paisley route.

Bruce, Shotts

Two recent additions are Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B58-56 ASU 512S ex-Anderson, Lower Largo and Plaxton C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 K444 GSM ex-Mayne, Buckie. Van Hool-bodied Volvo L82 XDS was re-registered 357 WMX in February while Plaxton C51F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 TIB 2400 (*HGD 829X, 2191 RO, TRR 424X*) is now owned by Anderson, Lower Largo.

Christie, Alloa

MVK 540R is an Alexander H48/33F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R acquired in April from Mitchell, Plean.

Clydeside CW

Unconfirmed reports indicate that this company may be taking delivery of up to 70 new buses this year, comprising both Alexander and Plaxton-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs and Mercedes-Benz Varios. The first of these vehicles had arrived by May in the shape of Alexander ALX-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs 806-10 (P806-10 DBS) although no further details are available yet.

903 (TPD 116X) is another Roe H43/29F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/1R acquired in February from the Kentish Bus fleet where it was numbered LR16. Similar 900-2 (TPD 106/30X, A147 FPG) were previously Kentish Bus LR6, 30, 47 and all four are now in full fleet livery and in use from Johnstone depot. 901/2 have been given white-based rear end advertisements for Golden Wonder Crisps.

Vehicles acquired in March comprised C203/7/9/11/2/4/6 EKJ and D34 KKP, Rootes B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608Ds previously Maidstone & District 1003/7/9/11/2/4/6; D650/2 CVN, similar but with Reeve Burgess B20F bodywork previously United Auto 2450/2; and C203 PCD, a similar Alexander B20F-bodied vehicle previously Maidstone & District 1000. C212/4 EKJ, D650/2 CVN, C203 PCD, C203/11 EKJ have been numbered 10-6 and all have entered service from Inchinnan depot on service 124 (Paisley Town Centre and Fereneze Avenue) in an allover lemon livery with 'F&L' fleetnames but with Clydeside legal lettering. It is not known what this fleetname stands for, but it would seem that it is the intention to give the impression that this is a small 'independent' operation. The remainder of these acquisitions had not entered service by May.

10/1 mentioned above had been re-registered HIL 8438/9 by May. Alexander-bodied Leyland Leopard 650 had also been re-registered from TSJ 50S to FUS 31S by March while similar driver trainer 451 has been re-registered from MHS 27P to PUS 226P.

Cumbrae, Millport

Leyland Nationals EMB 362S and GMB 388T have been repainted with black, rather than off-white, window surrounds to match the livery of Ikarus-bodied DAF M831 RCP. They have silver-grey wheels, however, as opposed to black used on the DAF.

Dart, Paisley

The Cowie group is reported to have taken a minority financial interest in this business at the end of May, with service revisions likely as a result.

A number of Leyland National buses joined this fleet in April comprising 10351A/2R-DP42F RJI 5343 (*OJD 871R*) ex-United 3501; 10351A/2R-B36D THX 179S, AYR 322T ex-East Midland 309/10; 11351/1R-B49F GOL 398N ex-East Midland 56; and 11351A/1R-B49F RBU 180R, VKU 79S, ABA 25T ex-East Midland 82, 79, 203. Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D231 URG, acquired last year, is now in service numbered 581.

Several Mercedes-Benz L608Ds have now been withdrawn and sold including 424 (C424 VVN), 507/49/59 (D507/49/59 RCK), and 586/7/9 (D236/7/29 URG).

Docherty, Irvine

The new Autobus Classique-bodied Mercedes-Benz mentioned last month was to have been registered 9229 ED, but due to a mix-up was delivered as 9229 FD which was of little use to Edward Docherty! As a result it was re-registered P828 MSD but will be re-registered again when a more suitable cherished mark is available.

Ferguson, Stirling

DP12FL Talbot Freeway G826 VGA, previously Clydeside 201, was purchased by this firm by April.

Fife Scottish ST

758 (A858 SUL) and 784/97 (B84, 97 WUV) are further Leyland Titan TNLXB2RRs with Leyland H44/26D bodywork to join this fleet in April from Selkent where they were numbered T858, 1084/97 respectively. They have been allocated to Cowdenbeath depot.

Mercedes-Benz 1 and Leyland Titans 765/7 have been allocated to St Andrews depot while Leyland Titans 760-2 are at Cowdenbeath depot. Northern Counties-bodied Volvo Citybus 941 was in standard bus livery ex-Fife Express version by April.

Recent withdrawals comprise Mercedes-Benz 811D/Carlyle B28F 2 (H882 LOX) which was an accident victim; Volvo B10M-61/Van Hool C53F 504 (IIL 3504, *E937 XSB, GIL 2967, E626 UNE*); Ailsa B55-10/Alexander H44/35F 838 (LSX 38P), 865 (OSC 65V); Bristol VRT/ECW CO43/31F 1107 (UWV 617S); Bristol VRT/ECW H43/31F 1110 (OVV 850R), 1117 (RTH 924S), 1122 (DWF 200V), 1129 (WHH 415S); Bristol VRT/Willowbrook H43/31F 1130 (PJJ 16S); and Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R/Alexander H49/37F 1144/57/61 (SCN 244/57/61S). 838/65 and 1157 were subsequently sold to PVS (dealer), Barnsley.

Two return journeys on service X16 between Edinburgh and Ardrossan Harbour via East Kilbride and Kilmarnock were introduced by this company on 23 May.

GCT FB

There are indications that the future of this company may be relatively short, with the address having been changed from Knightswood to Larkfield depot, and a number of GCT vehicles appearing with Greater Glasgow fleetnames including recent additions to the fleet MV11-6.

East Lancs-bodied Dennis Darts MD1-8 have been given large 'Super Low Floor Easy Access Bus' lettering.

Further to the April issue, the nine Alexander PS-bodied Volvo B10M-55s transferred to this fleet from Kelvin are DP48F rather than B49F, and examples noted do carry their GSV fleetnumbers. These vehicles were transferred to Larkfield depot in mid-May for use on service 19 to compete with the Stagecoach Glasgow service X19 to Easterhouse introduced at that time, and it is reported that all of them (GSV420-8) have been repainted into the new livery and carry Greater Glasgow fleetnames although at least GSV425/7 did initially operate from Parkhead in allover red with GCT fleetnames.

East Lancs-bodied Scania K92CRBs SS3-5 have been transferred to Kelvin.

Gibson, Moffat

K822/3 HUM are a pair of Van Hool C50F-bodied Volvo B10M-60s acquired in April ex-Wallace Arnold Coaches.

Glen, Port Glasgow

P390 OFS is a Mercedes-Benz 814D with Plaxton C33F coachwork which was new in April. Two other additions at that time were Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s M435/42 ECS (KSK 953/1) respectively, ex-Park, Hamilton.

Strathclyde Buses has been acquiring new and second-hand vehicles to help it compete with Stagecoach. This former Dennis Dart/UVG demonstrator, P2 UVG, and 14 similar new buses, is in Kelvin colours to compete on the Kilmarnock-Ardrossan corridor. It has the newer fleet name style, with the grey letters outlined in white. BILLY NICOL

Shetland Islands Council has recently changed its policy regarding the direct operation of certain bus services. While it currently continues to run the Friday-only service between the island of Whalsay and Lerwick, the responsibility for other services previously operated by a council-owned vehicle through the Social Work Department has now passed to the Roads and Transportation Department. Consequently, these services have been put out to tender and contracts awarded for their operation from the beginning of April.

As a result, a range of Rural Shopper services is now in place to offer infrequent links between various outlying areas of Shetland and Lerwick, principally for the elderly and disabled. From the North Mainland, White's Coaches of Bridge of Walls is providing a service for Hillswick every second Tuesday and Brae/Scatsta/Voe every fourth Friday while Shalder Coaches serves Lunnasting and Nesting every second Thursday. White's Coaches also serves Cunningsburgh in the South Mainland every Thursday, together with Sandness and Walls in the West Mainland every fourth Friday, and a feeder service between Aith and Bixter every second Tuesday. Other parts of the West Mainland served are Burra by Shalder Coaches every second Thursday and Weisdale/Whiteness/Stromfirth by Robinson & Morrison of Weisdale every second Tuesday. The final service of this type is a link between Lerwick and the neighbouring island of Bressay which was started on 8 April by John Leask & Son of Lerwick and operates on alternate Mondays and Tuesdays.

In connection with the recent Disability Discrimination Act the Department of Transport is currently involved in a working party with other interested organisations with a view to determining regulations which will be brought in to require bus operators to upgrade their fleets in order that the disabled, including wheelchair users, will in the future be in a position to use normal public transport. It is understood that the timescales presently envisaged are that new buses built from approximately 2000 onwards would comply with the ultimate requirements and that all relevant buses in use after about 2015 (perhaps later for double-deck buses) would also have to comply.

Shetland Islands Council is the first in Scotland which appears to have introduced a requirement for buses on tendered services to meet the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act, and it has been criticised for doing so on the basis that this is premature. Shetland operators have been advised that the Council's policies are being amended so that the provisions of the Act apply to all departments, and that as a result all future contract documentation for local bus service provision will include vehicle specifications which meet the PCV Accessibility Regulations as contained in the Act. This seems to be on the basis that there is no point in buying buses for use on council contracts if they will not meet likely future requirements.

The first contract to be awarded under these new requirements has already gone to a new operator, Andrew Morrison of Whiteness, who is now providing a service throughout the main part of the day in the Lerwick area aimed at the elderly and disabled, linking day centres, care centres etc. in the town using a 8.5metre Marshall Minibus. The service is another one which was previously provided by the Council's own transport in the shape of a Duple-bodied Dennis Javelin fitted with a wheelchair lift.

The problem envisaged by the local operators with the new requirements is that the public transport system in the islands relies on vehicles being able to fulfil a dual role, since income from tourism is a valuable source of revenue in addition to that from contract work. The tourist season is very short with limited work available and it might not be possible to purchase dedicated coaches for it, but buses purchased under the new requirements will have insufficient capacity for the tourist work available. Further discussions with the Council are now being sought by the operators with a view to reaching a compromise.

Reaction to the new Marshall bus is, however, reported to have been very favourable, but its owner is of the opinion that having a bus like this with no suitable stops to make the most of the low floor is a little like having ferries without piers. He also feels that, with some 25 wheelchair users in a Shetland population of about 25,000, alternative methods of catering for their transport needs in such a scattered rural environment would be more efficient.

Grampian FB

The company has confirmed an order for 16 Plaxton Pointer-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs which are due for delivery between January and March 1998. They will be used for further Gold Service expansion.

New Optare Prismas 540-9 were delivered with automatic vehicle location systems which will communicate with a geo-stationary satellite to allow the traffic office in King Street to know the exact location of these vehicles and take appropriate action to regulate operations as a result. The system was due to be in use by June in time for Green Transport Week and applied to service 16 (Springhill-Cove/Faulds Gate) on which the new buses will be concentrated. Real time information displays were being installed at Berryden and Provost Watt Drive along the route in connection with this system to give operational experience of this type of innovation. The Scottish Office-funded bus priority measures in King Street due to be implemented in August by Aberdeen City Council will include real time information displays, and some 60 buses operating in this corridor will be fitted with the necessary equipment.

Additions to the coach fleet in April were 96/7 (P2, 4 GRT), a pair of Scania K113CRB coaches with Irizar Century C49Ft bodywork finished in the silver executive livery. They are the first Scania and Irizar vehicles for the fleet and mark a departure from the traditional Volvo/Jonckheere combination. They have ousted Volvo B10M-61s 88 (TRS 333, *D330 VVV*) with Jonckheere C46Ft body and 89 (PSU 968, *D318 VVV*) with Jonckheere C51Ft body, both of which have been sold.

Yet another demonstrator numbered 28 arrived on loan to this fleet in April, this time in the shape of Optare Excel B34F N330 EUG. Unfortunately, a malfunction with its electronic destination display confined the vehicle to minor duties and it saw little service during its one-week stay.

MCW Metrorider 433 has been re-registered from D33 XSS to TRS 333. Leyland Atlantean 271 has been converted to open-top status as O45/29D ex-H45/29D. Work has also commenced on the conversion of 262. The Open Top Circular Tour was due to be reintroduced on 25 May on a 20min frequency using the enlarged open-top fleet of five Atlanteans (23, 262/71/8, 318). During the Cutty Sark Tall Ships Race visit on 12-15 July a special Maritime Aberdeen tour is to be operated.

Further to the May issue, repainting of buses at Aberdeen has not ceased altogether. Contrary to expectations the lone painter at King Street will continue to hand paint some buses although this will take about a month per bus to complete. The first example of this to be finished is Leyland Atlantean 307, now in the new livery, but Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 438/9 have also been repainted into the new colours although outshopped by Fleet Finish of Forfar which has won the contract to repaint the majority of vehicles in the local FirstBus fleets. This firm has given a five-year guarantee on each repaint.

Former Alexander-bodied AEC Reliance 14 (LRG 14G), now preserved by a Glasgow gentleman, has recently obtained a role in the forthcoming film 'The Winter Guest', due for release next year. It was disguised, however, as a Walter Alexander vehicle with its green waistband covered with blue vinyls and its city coat of arms replaced by Bluebird motifs.

Greater Glasgow FB

VO104/8/10 (P585/8/91 WSU) were amongst the first of 50 new Volvo Olympians with Alexander Royale H42/29F bodywork which began to arrive in May, with 35 of them expected to be allocated to Knightswood depot for use initially mainly on services 20 and 44.

P761-4 XHS are further examples of the Volvo B10L with Wright Liberator bodywork which arrived in May. Carrying paper stickers in their windscreens indicating that their fleetnumbers were SV761-4, they were put to work at the outset on Kelvin services operated out of Knightswood depot due to a vehicle shortage in that company, but were then transferred to Larkfield depot for use on the new X77 service which commenced on 27 May between Newton Mearns and Glasgow City Centre.

Seven further Plaxton Pointer B39F-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs were also delivered to Knightswood depot in May for use on the new 20min frequency X93 service which commenced on 19 May between Drumchapel and the City Centre. They comprise MD11-5/8, 20 (P626-30/3/5 WSU), according to the paper stickers initially placed in their windscreens, but these fleet numbers were amended after a few days to MD19, 23/6/8, which are more likely to be correct since there are already buses numbered MD1-18.

CV1 (H946 DRJ) is one of three Plaxton Paramount 3500-bodied Volvo B10M-60 coaches added recently to the Strathclyde Buses fleets, two having been allocated to this company and one to Kelvin. CV1, new originally as Shearings 946, is being used from Knightswood depot in allover white with the addition of Greater Glasgow fleetnames.

A further addition in May was P452 BPH, a Northern Counties Paladin-bodied Dennis Lance demonstrator which entered service in allover white with Greater Glasgow fleetnames. It was expected to remain on loan until July and be used from Parkhead depot on service 61 amongst others, but is to be replaced at that time by a Northern Counties-bodied Volvo B10BLE which will join the fleet on a permanent basis.

Volvo Citybuses AH24, 39; Leyland Olympians LO63/4, 92; Plaxton Verde-bodied Scania SS2; and Volvo Olympians VO44/8, 58, 76 have now been repainted into allover red. Since being repainted into these colours Leyland Olympian LO101 has carried (in addition to its normal fleetnames on the lower panels) four experimental fleetnames on the nearside between decks. In corporate style, they are entirely yellow, yellow with black edging, entirely white, and grey with white edging. It would appear that the latter version has found favour as the most recently repainted vehicles carry this style.

HAD Coaches, Shotts

FNS 979S (*RIJ 58, USR 325S, FSU 374, VMJ 959S*) is a Leyland Leopard PSU3E/4R with Plaxton C53F coachwork acquired in March ex-Stuart, Carluke.

Henderson, Hamilton

Additions to the fleet in March comprised Alexander B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D C808 SDY ex-Red & White 285; Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied L608D D556 RCK ex-Avondale, Greenock; and Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied 609D F136 KAO ex-Evans, Prenton.
An new hourly Monday to Friday service 75 between Carmyle and East Kilbride via Cambuslang and Cathkin was started on 6 May.

Highland Country NX

V641/3/5 (G251/3/5 VPK) are further Plaxton C46Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-60s which have joined this fleet from Speedlink, where they were V51/3/5. Similar G252 VPK reported last month has been numbered V642.

Other recent additions comprise ECW CH45/28F-bodied Leyland Olympian ONTL11/2Rs F381 (A260 YEP, *?, A507 GPC*) and F382 (B693 BPU), together with Alexander H44/34F-bodied Ailsa B55-10s CSL 601V and DSP 922/5V which were previously numbered 1, 22/5 by sister company Travel Dundee (formerly Tayside). It is understood that more Ailsas are likely to join this fleet.

Leyland National N8 had been re-registered from AOL 8T to NSK 272T by March.

Hutchison, Overtown

P502-4 VUS are Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s which were new in March while P203 UGA is a 10-seat Volkswagen Transporter new last December.

Kelvin FB

New coaches were added to this fleet in May for use on the new or revamped Cumbernauld-Glasgow services X3/X4/X5/X6 which were introduced on 19 May to compete with Stagecoach services. X3 runs every 20/30min while X4/X5/X6 combine to offer a 5min frequency in the peak hours between Wellington Street in the centre of Glasgow and Cumbernauld town centre/Abronhill, with lesser frequencies at other times, and have hostesses on board. CS1, 2 (P25/6 RFS) are Irizar Century C55F-bodied Scania K94s and CV4-10 (P765-71 XHS) are Plaxton Première C55F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s, all being in allover red with First Express Kelvin or Kelvin First Express fleetnames and allocated to Cumbernauld depot. Three other vehicles are required for these services and accordingly East Lancs DP51F-bodied Scania K93CRBs SS3-5 (TIB 8511-3) of 1993 have been transferred to this fleet from GCT after having been refurbished and repainted into allover red. They also are based at Cumbernauld depot and their fleetnames are Kelvin First Express.

A fleet of 18 buses was assembled for 25 May to operate the new service 11A between Kilmarnock and Ardrossan in competition with A1 Service, from a base in the premises of Eagle Coaches of Stevenston. The vehicles, in allover red with Kelvin fleetnames, comprise former UVG Urbanstar B34F-bodied Dennis Dart SLF demonstrator MD29 (P2 UVG), 14 similar buses delivered new, including MD31-3/5-40/2/3 (P749-51/3/4/6-9/61/2 XUS), and three Plaxton Pointer B39F-bodied examples of the same type comprising MD24/5/7 (P631/2/4 WSU).

Vehicles obtained on loan from other FirstBus companies in May included Alexander-bodied Leyland Atlanteans HSO 286/90V and LRS 291W from Grampian, together with Alexander-bodied Leyland Olympian ALS 129Y and Alexander-bodied MCW Metrobus B105 PKS from Midland Bluebird. All were allocated to Knightswood depot but were being confined to crew transport and contract work only.

As reported above, Greater Glasgow's new Wright Liberator-bodied Volvo B10Ls SV761-4 (P761-4 XHS) were initially used by this company from Knightswood depot on services 3 and 18 due to a shortage of vehicles.

Leyland Tigers ST348/95; Volvo B10B SV302; Volvo B10M-55s SV444/95, 513/23/4; MCW Metrobuses DM112/40; and Volvo Olympians VO28, 43 are all now in the new livery.

King, Kirkcowan

F649 EJA is a Ford Transit with Deansgate M14 body purchased in March ex-Toolan, Kinglassie.

Kinnaird, Tranent

Robin Hood B25F-bodied Iveco 49.10 F491 NTR was acquired last October, having previously been United Counties 54, while Reeve Burgess C27F-bodied MAN MT8.136 OWA 22X was purchased in March ex-Bembridge, Belper. Dormobile B20F-bodied Dodge S56 UKE 715X had gone by February.

Liddell, Auchinleck

G165 UUS is a Mercedes-Benz 208D with M12 body added to the fleet last October. Ikarus-bodied Volvo F888 GWD was re-registered XWA 907 by April.

Link, Glasgow

The Handy Link local service in Lanark registered earlier this year was cancelled with effect from 21 April, but a new half-hourly Monday to Friday Forge Link service in Glasgow around the Forge Shopping Centre at Parkhead was due to commence on the same date.

Lothian

Delivery started in May of the latest batch of Alexander Royale-bodied Volvo Olympians with 251/2 (P251/2 PSX) the first to be reported. It is anticipated that the majority (251-74) will be allocated to Marine garage as this depot is to operate vehicles along most of the new Greenway routes which are due to commence in August. 275-8 are to go to Central garage and 279/81-5 to Longstone, but it should be noted that there will be no number 280.
This company has never made much use of rear end advertising in the past, having only ever treated three vehicles in this way and all of them having now lost these adverts. However, Leyland Olympians 320/31/58 and 803 now carry pink-based rear vinyl adverts for Uni pens and markers, although thankfully their rear windows have not been panelled over as has been done elsewhere.

Lowland FB

The registrations for services 74 (Haymarket-Dalkeith), 106/108 (Edinburgh-Dunbar), 112/113/114 (Edinburgh-East Saltoun), and 129/X29 (Silverknowes-Seton Sands) were transferred from SMT to this company with effect from 25 May, although they will continue to be marketed as SMT services.

McCulloch, Stoneykirk

MNC 503W is a Leyland Leopard PSU3F/4R with Duple C44F bodywork acquired in February and last owned by Rent a Crane, Birmingham.

MacDonald, Howmore

G38 SSR is a Phoenix B23F-bodied Iveco 49.10 acquired in April having previously been Stagecoach South 38. Carlyle-bodied Freight Rover Sherpas D156 NON and F950 CUA, were sold to Ramm (dealer), Sudden at that time.

MacEwan, Amisfield

Bova FHD12-330 C53F integral M62 DSJ was acquired from Collison, Stonehouse in March.

McKindless, Wishaw

One of the vehicles acquired for the recently-expanded operations is Reeve Burgess DP19F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D507 RCK previously owned by Dart, Paisley. Leyland Nationals NEO 829R, UHG 723R, AFG 317S, and UEO 478T are also being used on these services, all in the previous livery of green and cream.

McNairn, Coatbridge

This company, which trades as JJ Travel, registered an additional service from 22 May, linking Coatbridge, South Circular Road, Old Monkland and Kirkshaws.

McQueen, Garelochhead

P993 TGB is a Mercedes-Benz 609D with Adamson C24F coachwork which was new in February.

Mackie, Alloa

J19 BUS and J20 BUS are Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-60s previously owned by Hutchison, Overtown and added to this fleet in March. They were quickly re-registered PFG 362 and YBL 526 respectively. Another recent arrival is Jonckheere C51F-bodied Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R MIB 3491 (SL 8417, A685 KMS, A528 BNT) which was previously owned by Black, Lochgelly.

Bova EL26/581 PFG 362 (*SMS 213X*) was re-registered NSC 822X in March. Duple C53F-bodied Volvo B58-56 FON 980V and Willowbrook Warrior-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU3D/4R KIB 8675 (*SAD 132R*), rebodied in 1988, have been sold to Moseley (dealer), Glenmavis and the latter is now with Campbell, Clydebank.

Marbill, Beith

Van Hool-bodied Volvo L786 ANS (*XAT 11X, L634 AYS, LSK 839*) was re-registered TIW 5725 in April. Duple-bodied Volvos OJI 5506 (*OHE 264X*) and CBZ 4622 (*YFJ 67X, UTC 872, OHE 268X*) have gone to the Allander, Milngavie fleet.

Mayne, Buckie

P222 GSM is a Volvo B10M-62 with Berkhof C51Ft bodywork new in April. Two further additions in May were Plaxton C51Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-60 J24 VWO ex-Garnett, Tindale Crescent and Caetano C51Ft-bodied Dennis Javelin N588 GBW ex-Maidstone & District 2588.

Midland Bluebird FB

Duple C49F-bodied Leyland Leopard LCL 805V was acquired from Kelvin in April for spares, and is now being broken up at Bannockburn.

Wright-bodied Mercedes-Benz 0.405 56, Alexander-bodied Leyland Tiger 105, and Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709D 636 have been repainted into Midland Bluebird FirstBus livery.

The registrations for services C5 and C55 (Wester Hailes-Restalrig) were transferred from SMT to this company on 25 May, but they will still be marketed as SMT services.

Millport Motors

A recent addition to this fleet is N804 GRV, a Dennis Dart 9.8SDL with UVG Urbanstar B40F bodywork in a revised livery of white with a dark blue skirt and blue Millport Motors fleetnames.

Mitchell, Plean

Recent acquisitions include Alexander H48/33F-bodied Leyland Atlantean AN68A/2R MVK 540R ex-Forrest, Bootle 70 and Jonckheere C46Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61 D903 BRS (*PSU 968, D318 VVV*), the latter vehicle having previously been Grampian 89 and still retaining the livery of that operator. The Atlantean quickly passed to Christie, Alloa.

Moffat & Williamson, Gauldry

K828 HUM is a further Jonckheere C50F-bodied Volvo B10M-60 from the Wallace Arnold Coaches fleet, having arrived in March. Plaxton-bodied Leyland Tiger coaches J28/9 UNY were re-registered 121/2 ASV in February.

Morrison, Whiteness

As reported above, new operator Andrew Morrison of Whiteness (who is also a director of Shalder Coaches) has purchased a Marshall Minibus for use on a Shetland Islands Council contract in the Lerwick area. P10 ASM is in a mainly red livery with grey skirt and Andrew's fleetname.

North Ayrshire Council

This Council has applied for an Operators' Licence to allow it to operate up to 15 Public Service Vehicles. As an Education Authority, it can do so under the Public Passenger Vehicles Act 1981 provided that the vehicles concerned are used for school transport purposes, but any vehicles so used can also be used to provide local bus services. It has been suggested that the Council may be interested in doing something of this nature on the island of Arran.

Orion, Wemyss Bay

Two recent additions are Dormobile Routemaker B23F-bodied Iveco Daily 49.10 J116 LKO previously East Kent 16 which arrived in March, and Reeve Burgess B29F-bodied Mercedes-Benz 811D H192 RWF previously London Buses MTL5 which followed in April.

Carrying the correct fleet name is Kelvin CS2 (P26 RFS), a Scania K94 with Irizar Century bodywork. BILLY NICOL

Clydeside has five new Alexander ALX200-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs. 808 (P808 DBS) is seen in Glasgow. BILLY NICOL

Park, Hamilton

Two vehicles transferred in from the Trathens, Plymouth fleet in March were Neoplan Skyliner N122/3-CH57/20Ct J450 NTT and Van Hool C44Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-62 N314 BYA.

New owners for Volvo coaches sold recently include Allander, Milngavie (Jonckheere-bodied N812/3 NHS); Barratt, Nantwich (Jonckheere-bodied N815 NHS); Browning, Whitburn (Van Hool-bodied M433/7ECS); Glen, Port Glasgow (Van Hool-bodied M435/42 ECS); Ralph, Slough (Jonckheere-bodied M629 FNS); and Smith, Coupar Angus (Van Hool-bodied M434 ECS).

PD Travel, Dumbarton

Philip Doherty, trading as PD Travel, registered a 40min Monday to Saturday local service between Clydebank bus station and Mountblow numbered 11D to commence on 20 May.

Prentice, West Calder

Recent additions comprise Duple C55F-bodied Leyland Leopard PSU5B/4R XNM 816S ex-Campbell, Clydebank; Duple C51Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-61 WNB 604 (*FHS 728X*) ex-Mitchell, Plean; and Van Hool C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61 HSB 373Y (*3099 SC*) ex-Pride of the Clyde, Port Glasgow.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo B10M-60 MBZ 8505 (*G22 MHG*) was re-registered YSV 608 in March and Northern Counties-bodied Daimler Fleetline YSV 608 (*VNB 241L*) was also re-registered at that time but its new mark is not yet known.

Plaxton-bodied Volvo B58-61 UIA 7088 (*BEC 306S*) was acquired by Evans, Prenton in March.

Pride of the Clyde, Port Glasgow

Van Hool-bodied Volvo coach HSB 373Y (*3099 SC*) is now with Prentice, West Calder.

Pringle, Bearsden

Leyland Fleetline SDA 543S has entered service in semi-open-top form in the blue and cream livery with lettering for 'The Original City Tour' in Glasgow. Similar KON 325P, NOC 407R, NOC 740R, and SDA 562S are also now in these colours.

P&T Coaches, Baltasound

The most northerly bus operation in Britain has recently changed hands with the business of Peter Mills of Baltasound on the Shetland island of Unst now owned by Priest & Thomson, as reported in the April issue. The vehicles which changed hands comprised former military Reeve Burgess B33F-bodied Dodge G13 A373 JSA; Duple C35F-bodied Bedford YMP C239 VPS; Plaxton C45F-bodied Ford R1014 D741 WRC; and Deansgate-bodied Ford Transits H253 ANE, H845 AUS. Two other former military buses, Reeve Burgess B39F-bodied Dodge G13s 30 KB 47 and 30 KB 53, also changed hands but were disused by Mills.

The company continues to operate the former Mills service linking RAF Saxavord, Haroldswick, Baltasound, Uyeasound and the ferry to Yell at Belmont.

Rapson's Coaches RP

P648 FST is a Volvo B10M-62 with Jonckheere Mistral C44Ft coachwork in Rapson's white and red livery while P649 FST is another Volvo B10M-62 but with Plaxton Expressliner C46Ft body in National Express Rapide colours.

Jonckheere-bodied Volvo B10M-61 448 GWL has lost its Scottish Citylink livery in favour of allover cream and has been re-registered USK 500Y. Van Hool-bodied Volvo B58-61 LIJ 595 (TOI 9785, CST 390W) has been re-registered MBS 281W.

Riverside, Paisley

P939 YSB is a Mercedes-Benz 711D with Plaxton B29F bodywork which was new in April.

Silver Coach Lines, Edinburgh

New vehicles in May comprised Kassbohrer Setra S250-C48Ft integrals P550-2 XTL and Caetano C18F-bodied Toyota BB50R P825 PSG. Caetano C19F-bodied Toyota HB31Rs F793-5 NNL have been sold and Kassbohrer Setra S215HR-C53F integrals PSU 619-21 were taken by Evobus (dealer), Lincoln in April; the latter coaches are to be re-registered by Evobus and the plates returned for use on the new Setras at the end of the season.

Southern, Barrhead

P20 SOU is a Volvo B10M-62 with Van Hool coachwork which was new in April.

Stagecoach Glasgow ST

Further service developments by this company which extend competition with FirstBus comprise the introduction of X19 (Buchanan bus station and Easterhouse) every 10min on 12 May; X1 (Buchanan bus station and East Kilbride, Greenhills via St. Leonards) every 30min on 26 May; X2 (Buchanan bus station and East Kilbride, Greenhills via Murray) every 30min on 26 May; 20 (Buchanan bus station and Drumchapel) every 10min on 9 June; 21 (Drumchapel and Clydebank bus station) every 10min on 9 June; 53 (City Centre and Milton) every 10min on 23 June; and X74 (St Enoch Square and Castlemilk) every 10min in June.

Alexander-bodied Volvo B6LEs 361-86 (P361-86 DSA) and Northern Counties-bodied Volvo B10M-55s 520-30 (P877/8/81/3-6/9/91/3/4 MNE) of Western Buses which were used to launch the Pollok and Easterhouse services, are to be transferred to this company according to official sources, although 520-30 may not remain long enough for this to happen as they are destined to join the Stagecoach Manchester fleet in the near future.

Other vehicles which were expected to be allocated to this fleet in due course comprise Western Buses Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 037-9/42/3/6 (D37-9, 42/3/6 UAO), 051-5/8 (D531/20/30/4/25/58 RCK), 080 (C80 OCW); similar Sparshatt B20F-bodied 081-3 (D81-3 UFV); similar Alexander B21F-bodied 201/4 (C101/4 KDS), 207/8/13/8/26/30/1 (D107/8/13/8/36/0/21 NUS); and similar PMT B21F-bodied 233 (C594 SHC). Details of their previous owners are given under Western below.

Strathtay YT

Two East Lancs-bodied Dennis Dart SLFs are due to be delivered in July for Montrose depot and three Plaxton-bodied Volvo B10M-62 coaches are expected in August for Citylink work.

C649/53 XDF are a pair of Alexander B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608Ds which joined this fleet around March, having previously been numbered 649/53 with Cheltenham District.

Travel Dundee NX

It is reported that a total of no less than 60 Wright Liberator-bodied Volvo B10Ls will join this fleet over the next two years, with 20 following the current deliveries in 1998 and 20 more in 1999. More examples of this type which had entered service by mid-May in the new livery were 131-41 (P131-41 KSL) with 131/2 carrying route branding for services 32/33 (City Centre-Fintry) and 133-41 similarly treated for services 15/17 (Whitfield-Ninewells Hospital). 127-30 also carry route branding for services 32/33. 127 onwards have electronic winding systems for their front, side and rear destination/service number equipment and this feature is to be retrofitted to earlier examples 122-6.

When Alexander-bodied Ailsa 42 was taken into the paintshop recently it was anticipated that it would emerge in the new white, red and blue Travel Dundee livery. Instead, it re-entered service in April in the previous dark blue and cream colours but with Travel Dundee fleetnames. East Lancs-bodied Ailsa 84 subsequently appeared in this guise and it now appears that this will be the pattern for double-deck buses, at least for the present. Many other buses in the former blue and cream liveries have also now been fitted with Travel Dundee fleetnames.

Alexander-bodied Dodge S56 204 (D704 EES) has been withdrawn following gearbox failure and is unlikely to run again. As reported above, Alexander-bodied Ailsas 1 (CSL 601V), 22/25 (DSP 922/5V) have been transferred to sister company Highland Country.

Consideration is being given to a move from the company's eight-acre base at East Dock Street to a smaller site still located near the city centre and various options for this are being examined. This would free East Dock Street for redevelopment, possibly for retail use.

In an attempt to provide reliable information about the Dundee bus scene to bus enthusiasts throughout Britain two regular contributors to this column, Chris Forbes and Andrew Gronneberg, have recently begun to produce a Dundee Bus Bulletin newsletter which will be circulated to various publishers, magazines and enthusiast bodies but will also be available by subscription. Bulletin 3 was due to appear in May at 65p per copy, while a subscription to the next 12 issues costs £6.50. Orders should be sent to Andrew Gronneberg, 70 Spey Drive, Menzieshill, Dundee, DD2 4AQ with payments made payable to him.

Walker, Dalmuir

Alexander DP19F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D D229 URG has been purchased from Dart, Paisley where it was numbered 589.

Weir, Clydebank

A venerable addition to this fleet in April was NMS 576M, a 1973 Leyland Leopard PSU3/3 with Alexander B53F bodywork previously with Campbell, Clydebank but new originally as Alexander (Midland) MPE 176.

West Coast, Campbeltown

M826 RCP is a Van Hool C51Ft-bodied DAF SB3000WS601 added to the fleet in April ex-Speedlink, in which fleet it was numbered DAF26.

Western ST

According to official records, Alexander ALX200-bodied Volvo B6LEs 361-86 (P361-86 DSA) and Northern Counties Paladin-bodied Volvo B10M-55s 520-530 (P877/8/81/3-6/9/91/3/4 MNE) are to be transferred to the Stagecoach Glasgow fleet from Western Buses in due course although 520-30 may go to Stagecoach Manchester (as was originally intended) before that happens. It should be noted that 520/1/6/7/9/30 are B48F while 523/4/8 are DP47F with 522 unknown as yet.

Other vehicles acquired recently by Western but which are to be allocated to the Stagecoach Glasgow fleet at a later date comprise Reeve Burgess B20F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 037-9/42/3/6 (D37-9, 42/3/6 UAO) previously Cumberland 37-9, 42/3/6; similar 051/3-5/8 (D531/30/4/25/58 RCK) previously Cumberland 531/0/4/25/58; similar but DP19F 052 (D520 RCK) previously Cumberland 520; similar 080 (C80 OCW) previously Burnley & Pendle 80; and similar Sparshatt B20F-bodied 081-3 (D81-3 UFV) previously Burnley & Pendle 81-3.

Indigenous Alexander B21F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608Ds 201/4 (C101/4 KDS), 207/8/13/8/26/30/1 (D107/8/13/8/36/0/21 NUS); and similar PMT B21F-bodied 233 (C594 SHC) have also been earmarked for transfer to the Stagecoach Glasgow fleet.

Plaxton Paramount C53F-bodied Volvo B10M-61s 132/3 (J917/9 LEM) were transferred to this fleet in April from Bluebird Buses where they were numbered 621/2. They carry Stagecoach fleetnames (as on the articulated coaches) rather than Stagecoach Express and have been allocated to Stranraer depot. Another acquisition from the same source is PMT C21F-bodied Mercedes-Benz L608D B163 CMB, allocated fleetnumber 692 by its previous owner, but destined to be broken up for spares by Western.

As reported above, Alexander-bodied Mercedes-Benz 709Ds 270 (G72 APO) and 271 (G976 ARV) have joined the A1 Service fleet rather than this one.

Alexander-bodied Dennis Dorchester 119 (VLT 73, *D219 NCS*) has been re-registered D131 UGB, with its previous mark now on a private car. Leyland Leopard 662 is reported to be in corporate livery ex-Western colours while similar 622 is now B51F ex-DP49F.

Several coaches were sold to Kirkby (dealer), South Anston in April comprising Plaxton 425/Lorraine C51Ft integral 108 (J8 WSB); Plaxton Paramount-bodied Dennis Javelin 12SDAs 111 (H751 LSD, *803 DYE, H661 UWR*), 113/4 (J13/4 WSB); and similar Plaxton Premiere-bodied 115 (J15 WSB). Former Arran Transport Duple Dominant B55F-bodied Bedford YMT 727 (D799 USB) was sold to Rickman, Kent in April.

On 14 April new Ayr town service A7 was introduced between Waggon Road and Overmills Road. It is of particular interest as it is advertised as the 'New A7 Mercedes Minibus Service' being operated by Stagecoach Western Buses in association with Caledonian Trucks, a Mercedes-Benz service centre and dealer based in Heathfield, Ayr.

Wilson, Carnwath

M125/6 UWY are a pair of Plaxton C50F-bodied Volvo B10M-62s acquired in February ex-Wallace Arnold Coaches while SJI 1976 (*501 KAA, C467 SSF*) is a Plaxton C51F-bodied DAF MB200DKFL600 which arrived in March ex-Grangeburn, Motherwell together with Caetano C49Ft-bodied Volvo B10M-60 J475 NJU ex-Jeffs, Helmdon.

Van Hool-bodied Volvo G339 HSC and Caetano-bodied Volvo K95 UFP were re-registered NIL 1509/5 last year.

Woods, Falkirk

This operator continues to provide subsidised services between Falkirk and Slamannan, Caldercruix, and Avonbridge on behalf of Falkirk Council. P145/6 MNB are a pair of 16-seat LDV minibuses which were new in March which replaced Leith-bodied Freight Rover Sherpa D309 TSM and Deansgate-bodied Sherpa E902 XNA, both of these being sold to Chatfields (dealer), Manchester.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A1 Service, J Anderson, Bluebird Buses, P Clark MHS, M Clarke, M Currie, Dundee Bus Bulletin, J Dunne, Edinburgh City Council, C Forbes, GCT, Greater Glasgow, T Hamilton, S Hulse, N Jones, Kelvin, R MacNeil, G Munro, B Nicol, PSV Circle, K Robertson, S Suttie, R Walter, Weirs Tours, and Western Buses have contributed news items this month and their assistance is gratefully acknowledged.

Group codes

CW — Cowie Group
FB — FirstBus
NX — National Express Group
RP – Rapsons
SB — Strathclyde Buses Holdings
ST — Stagecoach
YT — Yorkshire Traction

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IRISH MAJOR OPERATORS

Ulsterbus

Two Alexander (Belfast)-bodied Leyland Tigers have been returned to service following heavy accident repairs; 479 (HXI 479) and 1228 (NXI 4228) have returned to Newry and Enniskillen depots respectively. Pressure on the central workshops does not let up, and vehicles detaxed for repairs include Mercedes/Reeve Burgess 65 (PIW 5916), Mercedes/Wright 885 (AAZ 8885) and Volvo B10M/Alexander 1530 (DAZ 1530).

Vehicles withdrawn after accidents are Leyland Leopard/Alexander 207 (WOI 2207) at Coleraine and Bristol RELL/Alexander 2383 (UOI 2383) at Lisburn. These are not scheduled for repair.

Vehicles detaxed to the reserve fleet are Leyland Leopard/Alexander 107/9/17/26 (ROI 107 etc), Mercedes-Benz/Ulsterbus 803 (KXI 7803), Bristol RELL/Alexander 2233 (ROI 2233), and Leyland Leopard/Alexander (Falkirk) 1882/5 (MHS 21P, OSJ 613R). The last two were both driver training vehicles, although 1885 had latterly been used in service in Armagh. Similar 1886 (OSJ 820R) has been sold for preservation to the Irish Transport Trust.

Bangor-based advertising vehicle 1035 (JXI 1035) has been painted in a new corporate advertising livery for Translink; the main colour is green. Similar 1122 (LXI 1122), based in Ballymena, is receiving an advertising livery for Fairhill Shopping Centre in the same town.

Flexibus has dropped Mercedes-Benz/Ulsterbus 29 (KXI 1029) to the reserve fleet list.

Citybus

The last two of the batch of 50 Volvo B10L/Alexander Ultra B44F low-floor buses have been delivered as 2749/50 (LAZ 2749/50) allocated to Short Strand.

A further batch of Bristol RELL/Alexander detaxed to the reserve fleet are 2479-85 (WOI 8479/89, XOI 2481-5), all released from Great Victoria Street sub depot. These are replaced by the transfer of similar Bristols 2539-45 (AXI 2539-45) from Short Strand.

Advertising bus 2618 (NXI 4618) has reappeared promoting the Dinosaurs Exhibition in the Ulster Museum. Its previous livery promoted the company's arts sponsorship, 'Poetry in Motion'. The new livery is predominantly black but in accordance with the new policy for advertising buses, carries corporate livery on the front panel.

Bristol RELL/Alexander 2415 (VOI 8415) has been sold for preservation to the Irish Transport Trust. This was one of the last of the dual-door Bristols to be used in service.

Dublin Bus

The first of the 1997 order for 60 Volvo Olympians arrived in late April; these are designated RV to reflect the Volvo parentage. Donnybrook has received RV326-30 (97 D 326-30) and deliveries to Conyngham Road with RV331-3 (97 D 331-3), and likely to go up to RV348.

Liveries vary on the few buses already delivered. RV326/7 are in normal fleet green; RV328/9 are in overall white for private hire wedding work as well; RV330 alone is turned out in the attractive green/cream coach livery for use mainly on city tours work, although it will see normal bus service in the earlier morning rush hour and in the evenings. All the Conyngham Road buses, RV331-3 and subsequent deliveries will appear in CitySwift colours. The frontal appearance of the buses is quite different, with the application of the diagonal Volvo badge in place of simply the Volvo name.

Still on the subject of livery, a very smart version of the trial livery recently applied to Olympian RH86 has been applied to DAF SB220/Alexander single-deck AD24 which is to be seen regularly on route 11. This still remains a trial livery for the moment, though its application on AD24 looks considerably more attractive than on the Olympian.

The influx of new Olympians at Conyngham Road will signal the withdrawal of some of the KD-class Bombardier double-deckers allocated there and possibly some of the KC-class single-deckers too. The process also involves the transfer of some of the earlier Olympians, with RA225 going to Ringsend and RA299-306 shortly to transfer to Donnybrook. However so far only two KDs have been withdrawn — Conyngham Road's KD246 and Donnybrook's KD249; similar KD251 has transferred to Conyngham Road from Donnybrook.

GAC single-decker KC93 was severely damaged in an accident at Blackrock and is unlikely to be repaired. As well as normal daily service, this bus acted as a mobile ticket office for the late night 'Nitelink' services; as a result similar buses KC81, 199 at Donnybrook have been modified to perform this task.

A new range of overall rear advertisements have appeared, for Ben Sherman shirts. These are on Olympians RH59, 163, RA207/38. Donnybrook has Ringsend's RH7 on temporary loan in exchange for RH84 which has a Spar overall advert.

Mercedes-Benz minibus ME22 has returned from Waterford Bus Eireann relief duties and is in store at Donnybrook. Summerhill's GAC single-decker KC3 has joined KC16 in store, and minibus ML12 is in store at Ringsend.

Bus Eireann

The remaining coaches of the March/April batch of Caetano Algarve II C53F-bodied Volvo B10Ms, VC59/60 (97 D 24580, 25423), have been delivered and are allocated to Limerick. More coaches of this type were expected in May and June.

The remaining ten Volvo/Plaxton coaches have arrived to complete the first batch of 1997 deliveries of this type. VP50-9 (97 D 28772/6, 29953/4, 28779/84/7/91/7/9) are in normal Bus Eireann livery, unlike previously-delivered VP48/9 which carry Eurolines markings. VP50/8/9 are allocated to Waterford, VP51 to Galway, VP52-5 to Broadstone, VP56/7 to Cork; VP48/9 are also at Broadstone. VP50-3 are fitted with toilets and are C49Ft. Some of the new coaches have been rented out to the various political parties contesting the Irish general election. Fine Gael has rented VP54, Labour VP52, while Fianna Fail has Volvo/Caetano VC32.

At Drogheda, GAC rural bus KR158 has been specially treated for the summer to publicise the Boyne Heritage Tour.

Transfers involve DAF/Van Hool coaches DVH5/6 (Limerick-Broadstone), with Volvo/Caetanos VC11/2 moving in return. VC68-71 have also been transferred from Limerick to Broadstone, for extended tours. Other transfers are DAF/Plaxton PD45 (Waterford-Limerick) and Tiger/Alexander TE34 (Stranorlar-Dundalk); Stranorlar gets CVH35 from Sligo. Leyland Leopard driver trainer L2, E152, has, transferred from Galway to Ballina.

GAC rural buses which have changed classification from KR to KS (school service) are KS17-22 at Dundalk and Drogheda, KS101 at Tralee and KS129 at Galway (which transfers to Athlone).

School bus withdrawals are Bedford SB5s SS589/627/39 (UZU 589 etc) at Longford; Leyland Leopard PSU5/4Rs MS33, MDS102/42/50 (33 IK etc) at Dundalk; and Bristol RELL BG8 (75 D 96) at Dundalk — formerly Ulsterbus 2015 (JOI 3015).

Recent deliveries to Bus Eireann have included Caetano-bodied Volvo B10Ms. VC58 (97 D 19192) is based at Limerick. JOHN A. DOHERTY

IRISH INDEPENDENTS

APT Travel, Kells

The first vehicle to be reported with this new operator is WDZ 2174 (*BXI 7437, A941 XFW, OHE 50, A71 WDT*), a Leyland Royal Tiger with Roe Doyen C50F body, ex-Berks, Bakewell.

Easyway Coaches, Millisle

Two additions to this fleet are VSS 3X, a Leyland Tiger TRCTL11/3R with Duple C51F body, ex-Cleveland Transit 194, and GGD 665T, a Volvo B58-61 with Plaxton C50F body ex-Travelwise, Larne.

Eurocoach, Dungannon

JIL 5655 (*A2 WKC, A111 SNH*) is a DAF SB2300 with Jonckheere C51FT body recently acquired from Brownes, East Grinstead.

Guide Friday, Dublin

Another Atlantean has joined the fleet, possibly from Nottingham. It is registered 75 KE 526 for the Dublin Tour.

Lakeland Tours, Lisbellaw

Recently acquired from Rennie, Dunfermline, was N782 OGA, a Mercedes-Benz 814D with Mellor C33F body.

Logan, Dunloy

Two new additions to this fleet are P170/2 NAK, Volvo B10M-62s with Plaxton C49F bodies.

McGread, Fintona

The first full-size vehicle for this operator is OIW 1461 (*87 KK 1315, GSU 372, D864 EFS*), a DAF MB200 with Van Hool body ex-Chambers, Moneymore.

Mourn, Portglenone

Another new operator, and the first vehicle to report is B103 YUC, a Toyota BB30R with Caetano C19F body, ex-McGinn, Ballycastle.

North Antrim Tours, Ballymena

Yet another new operator, and the first vehicle to be reported is AAZ 3514 (*F632 HVM*), a Mercedes-Benz 609D with Made-to-Measure C24F body, ex-Northern Coaches, Newtownabbey.

Rooney, Hilltown

Acquired from Easyway Coaches, Newtownards, is WGA 908V (*WLT 652, DSD 939V*), a Seddon Pennine VII/Alexander C45F.

St Kevins, Glendalough

A new bus for the Dublin-Glendalough stage carriage service is Leyland Tiger/Plaxton 88 CN 1251, in overall white livery.

Travelwise, Larne

A third Scania has now been added to this fleet. TJI 5390 (*G883 VNA*) is a K93CRB with Plaxton C53F body, ex-Dodds, Ayr.

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Further details of the above event, vehicle entry forms, stall booking forms or membership of the Routemaster Association, please contact (enclosing a large stamped addressed envelope): RMOOA, 31 Pooley Avenue, Egham, Surrey TW20 8AB.

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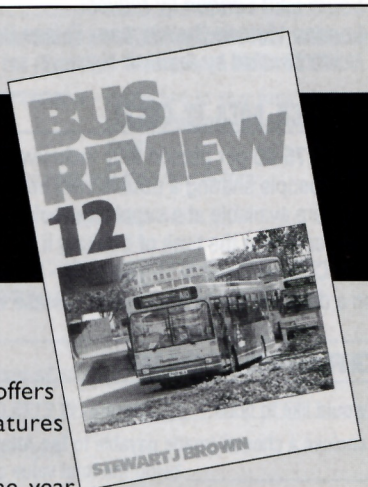
BUS REVIEW 12

by Stewart J Brown



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ITINERARY

DAY ONE - THURSDAY 28 AUGUST	*DAY TWO- FRIDAY 29 AUGUST*	*DAY THREE- SATURDAY 30 AUGUST*	*DAY FOUR- SUNDAY 31 AUGUST*
Visit the Great Central Railway and climb aboard for a return journey from Loughborough to Leicester North, followed by a guided tour of the loco shed (*duration approx 3 hours*)	Visit Transperience, Bradford (*duration approx 1½ hours*)	Depart hotel at 1100 - morning at leisure	Visit National Railway Museum, York (*duration approx 2½ hours*)
Visit Crich Tramway Museum (*duration approx 2 hours*)	Visit Keighley Bus Museum for a guided tour (*duration approx 1 hour*)	Visit East Lancs Railway. Climb aboard for a return journey Diesel out and Steam return followed by 3 hours in Bury to view the Loco Sheds and Bury Transport Museum	Visit Sandtoft Transport Centre (*duration approx 2 hours*)
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EVENTS

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EARLY WARNING! FESTIVAL OF MODEL TRAMWAYS, Kew Bridge Steam Museum, Green Dragon Lane, Brentford, Middx. July 26 & 27. 11am - 5pm. 0181 568 4757. See July issue Light Rail & Modern Tramway advert.

BRITISH BUS DAY / BBC RADIO NORFOLK CAR RALLY / POLICE GALA DAY, Norwich, 17th August, Eastern Transport Collection. Details, L. Wright, 31 Norwich Road, Costessey, Norwich NR5 0EA.

IPSWICH TRANSPORT MUSEUM. Come and Ride On Our Buses Day Sunday 28 September. Details, King, 3 Bushey Close, Capel St Mary, Ipswich IP9 2HW.

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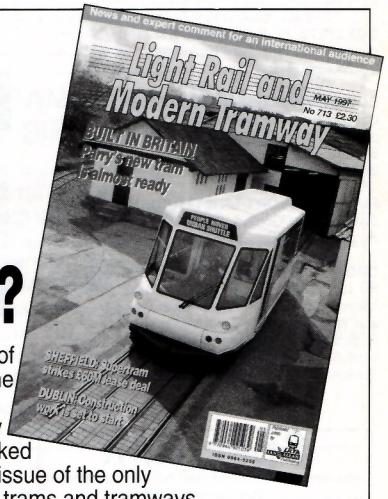
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	CORGI 2nd 1/2 YEAR RELEASES 1997	
	CONNOISSEUR COLLECTION	
36501	Burlingham Seagull Coach & Morris Traveller Set, Bartons	Aug £24.99
34703	Karrier W Trolleybus, Derby Corp	Sept £20.99
35303	Bedford Val Coach, Selnec	Oct £17.99
35101	Aec Routemaster, O/T, RM94 London Transport, Sightseeing	Dec £22.99
	A COMPLETE SET £86.99	
31804	Bus Depot	£8.99
	ORIGINAL OMNIBUS RELEASES JANUARY TO JUNE 1997	
	CLASSIC VEHICLES	
C40405	AEC Regent II-Grimsby	£9.99
42603	Bedford OB - Hants & Sussex (60th Anv)	£9.99
40406	AEC Regent II - City of Oxford	£9.99
	BLACKPOOL COLLECTION	
43503	Balloon Tram - Blackpool (Prewar)	Jun £12.99
43502	Balloon Tram - Blackpool (Wartime)	Jun £12.99
43501	Balloon Tram - Blackpool (1960's)	Jun £12.99
	MODERN VEHICLES	
43004	Leyland Olympian - Keighley & District	June £9.99
42802	Dennis Dart - Eastern National	£9.99
42704	Van Hool Alizee - Wallace Arnold	£9.99
	OO Jan to June Catalogue	£1.50
	ACCESSORIES	
95400	Bus Garage Kit	£6.99
44901	Bus Station Kit	£6.99
	CORGI CLASSICS JAN - JUNE 1997 RELEASES	
	THE CONNOISSEUR COLLECTION	
34901	Leyland Royal Tiger - Manchester Corp	£16.49
34301	Guy Arab Utility - Swindon Corp	£21.49
35005	AEC Routemaster RM254 - London Trans	£22.99
	BEATLES COLLECTION	
	NEW RELEASES FROM CORGI CLASSICS	
35006	AEC Routemaster Liverpool Corp	May/Jun £22.99
35302	Bedford Val Magical Mystery Tour	Jul/Aug £19.99
	THE COMPLETE SET ALSO INCLUDES THE FOLLOWING:	
05401	Yellow Submarine	SOLD OUT
58003	Newspaper Taxi & Figures (Rita Meter Maid & Meter)	Jun/Jul £12.49
05706	Bedford CA Graffiti Van & Beatles Fans Figures	Sep/Oct £18.99
	JAN-JUNE AMERICAN RELEASES	
	VINTAGE BUSES	
54008	GM4502 Market Street Railway San Francisco	£20.99
54009	GM4507 New England Tr	£20.99
53903	Yellow Coach 743 East Michigan	£20.99
54503	GM4503 New York World Fair	£23.49
54010	GM4505 Chicago Motor Coach	£20.99
54104	GM4509 Peerless Stages	£20.99
54504	GM5301 Santa Monica	£23.49
55001	P.C.C. Street Car Philidelphia	Jun/Jul £23.49
	FALLEN FLAGS	
53907	Yellow Coach 743 Baltimore & Ohio	Jan/Feb £20.99
54805	GM5301 Reading Lines	Mar/Apr £23.49
54106	GM4509 New Haven Apr/May	£20.99
	LIONEL CITY	
54011	GM4507 Lionel City Bus Lines	Jan/Feb £20.99
54404	GM5301 Lionel City Transit Corp	Apr/May £23.49
55004	P.C.C. Street Car Lionel City Catalogue	Jun/Jul £23.49 £2.00
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91760	London Routemaster Bus	£5.99
3240	R/M Guide Friday	£5.99
32301	**London Routemaster Bus**	**June** £5.99
	MODERN BUSES	
32601	Plaxton Coach Bluebird	£10.99
32602	Plaxton Coach National Express	£10.99
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	PUBLIC TRANSPORT	
10057	Slumberland Gift Set	£11.99
33201	AEC Regal Finglands	£13.49
33501	Leyland Atlantean Guide Friday	£15.99
33501	OB Titfield Thunderbolt	£13.49
34101	Burlingham Ribblesdale Batty Holt	£10.99
34701	Karrier Trolleybus Nottingham	£17.99
34702	Karrier Trolleybus Ashton Under Lyme	£20.99
34801	Leyland Olympian Western Welsh	£10.99
35201	Daimler Utility Greenline L/T	£17.50
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91914	Plaxton Speedlink	£5.99
91922	Plaxton Greenline (H/Hempstead)	£8.99
91922	Plaxton Greenline (Harlow) or both 91922 Models for	£8.99 £15.00
96990	AEC Regal Southall Set	£11.25
96995	Ian Allan Anniversary Set	£12.99
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97003	AEC Regent West Bridgeford	£5.45
97020	AEC Wye Valley	£5.99
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97191	AEC Halfcab Rosslyn	£7.49
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40102	Park Royal T/Bus Hastings	£9.49
40202	AEC Reliance BEA	£8.99
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40501	Bristol L London Trans	£8.99
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97839	PD1A Eastern Counties	£5.25
97551	Bristol Hants & Dorset	£8.99
97852	Bristol L6 Maidstone & District	£8.99
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97903	Leyland Leopard Loch Swilly	£5.25
97904	AEC Reliance Leicester	£5.25
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98601	TD4502 Pacific Electric	£9.99
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23501	Alexander Atlantean Edinburgh	£10.39
20615	Plaxton Pointer Thamesdown	£10.39
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20004DL	Leyland PD2 Sunderland	£9.89
22004	Bedford TK Artic Vladivar Vodka	£9.89
13203	Atkinson Tanker Mackeson	£9.89
July		
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23701	Alexander Fleetline (A) Trent	£10.39
10123	AEC RT London Country	£9.89
19707DL	AEC Regent V West Yorkshire	£9.89
18603	Bristol VR 111 Open Top E Yorkshire	£10.39
13405	Leeds Tram Road Safety	£9.89
19404	Atkinson Artic Box & Craft	£9.89
24001	Bedford Short Box & Trailer Myers Reds	£10.39
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	Stock List	
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10119	RT Hull Corporation	£5.50
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11007	AEC 8 Wheel Box Van Bouts	£5.50
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13201	Tanker Suttons	£9.75
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13909	Bristol Lodekka Cambus	£6.75
14008	Bristol Lodekka Morris Bros	£7.99
15609	R/M Mansfield & District	£6.75
15610	R/M 'Daltons Weekly'	£5.50
15704	Plaxton Abbots	£4.99
15705	Plaxton Sheffield United	£5.50
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15903	PD1 Samuel Ledgard	£4.99
15904	PD1 Highbridge 'City'	£4.99
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18711	Bedford Vega Bolton	£5.50
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20612	Plaxton Dennis Dart Metrobus	£9.89
22901	Bedford TK Boxvan BRS Southern	£9.89
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16112	Leyland PD2 Highbridge Stockport	£9.89
17203DL	Leyland National Yorkshire Terrier	£9.89
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22602	AEC Ergo Artic Flat Bed BRS	£9.89
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1:76 Scale/00 gauge precision diecast models

IMPORTANT NOTICE: THE INTRODUCTION OF TWO EXCITING NEW SERIES FOR THE DEDICATED COLLECTOR.

The GROCERY SERIES and BREWERY SERIES are easily identifiable by their brightly coloured customised packaging, cream for the Grocery and green for the Brewery Series. Each series features approximately 15 models recreating authentic vehicles as used by companies in the brewing and grocery trades. The models will be produced in very restricted quantities, so be sure to place your orders early to avoid the disappointment of missing out.

23302 AEC RF LONDON TRANSPORT ☐

Surely one of the most requested vehicles of all time, the London Transport RF bus is seen here in the famous red livery for which these attractive and surprisingly modern vehicles were famed. MXX 405, fleet number RF428, is on route 250 to Passingford Bridge and with its multitude of detail will surely rank as one of the most desirable die-cast models ever produced.

23501 Alexander Atlantean EDINBURGH ☐

The first release of our stylish new double deck bus is in the much requested livery of Edinburgh Corporation Transport. EWS 812D, fleet number 812, is on route 16 to Oxgangs and carries the Edinburgh crest on its sides. Complete with period adverts for Ringtons Tea and Technics Hi-Fi, this model is a must for all bus collectors.

20615 Plaxton Pointer THAMESDOWN ☐

Run by Thamesdown on the Dartline service, fleet number 120 also carries the name of North Star. XMW 120 shows the increasingly popular practice of giving new buses non-dating registration numbers. Displaying route X53 to Cricklade Purton on its digital route blinds, this Pointer is typical of the vehicles in this modern fleet.

22505 Alexander Y-Type VENTURE ☐

The much requested three-tone livery of Venture Transport makes its debut on the popular Y-Type, setting it aside from previous releases. Built on a Leyland Leopard chassis, this example was one of six ordered just before the company was sold to Northern General. HUP 386H, fleet number 286, can be seen on route 11 to Newcastle via Shotley Bridge.

BREWERY SERIES

13203 Atkinson Tanker MACKESON ☐

Our second Brewery Series vehicle, this attractive black and silver tanker carries extensive decoration and was part of a large fleet run by the Whitbread company in the 'fifties and 'sixties. 163 ALM, fleet number AT170 will be sold in the special Brewery Series Box, lending another famous name to your Exclusive First Editions collection.

20604DL Pointer/Dart YORKSHIRE TERRIER ☐

Expanding this popular Sheffield fleet to four vehicles, K1 YTB, fleet number 101, becomes a De-Luxe model and will therefore prove to be in great demand. On route 127 to Crystal Peaks, this model comes with a numbered certificate showing its limited production run.

20004DL Leyland PD2/12 SUNDERLAND ☐

Allowing collectors to expand their Sunderland fleet, this Leyland PD2/12 is now available as PUP 546, fleet number 274. In the attractive blue and white livery, this bus shows adverts for Vaux Beer and Dulux paint.

22004 Bedford TK Artic VLADIVAR VODKA ☐

This striking livery with the Vladivar Imperial Eagle on the sides of the trailer is sure to please many collectors. HDJ 65N even displays its legal weight on the fuel tank!

Keep up to date with all our model release information by joining our Subscription Service for an annual U.K. fee of £4.
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